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AN EXPOSITION
OF
THE FOUR GOSPELS.
VOL. II.



AN EXPOSITION

OF

THE FOUR GOSPELS,

OF WHICH THOSE BY

ST. MARK, ST. LUKE, AND ST. JOHN, HAVE NEVER BEFORE
BEEN PUBLISHED.

BY

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RECTOR OF WINTRINGHAM;

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THE EARL OF GLASGOW.

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR, BY THE EDITOR.

Ἀποθανὼν ἔτι λαλεῖται.—Heb. xi. 4.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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EXPOSITION, &c.

ST. MARK.

SECTION I.

Chap. i. ver. 1—8.

THE OFFICE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

1. The beginning of the gospel

In Judea, seventeen, or eighteen hundred years ago ; and at all times, and in all places to the end of the world. To every one of us now, when we are laid low enough in our own eyes to seek after Jesus Christ, know our own want of him, and that we must be undone without him. Let us ask ourselves what progress we have made in the knowledge, love, and power of it ?

“Of the gospel,” viz. :—peace with God, forgiveness of sins, release from condemnation, acceptance to a state of sonship, and inheritance by Jesus Christ. What says the heart to all this ?

1. Of Jesus Christ,

Let us not separate Jesus from Christ. He is *Jesus*, a Saviour, as the name imports ; but then he is only so to those who receive him as the Christ, the *Anointed* of God, to be their king, priest, and prophet.

1. The Son of God ;

Himself God, as the Son of man is a man; perfectly acquainted with the will of God, sent from him to declare it, and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.—Lord, help the writer to speak concerning this blessed gospel of glad tidings, and you to receive it in love! Alas! what are we when we stand off from it in unbelief; think coldly of it, prefer our own lost state in the world to it, or do not receive it into our hearts!

2. As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

The messenger and preacher of repentance. The way to Christ is through the doctrine of John the Baptist.

3. The voice of one crying in the wilderness,

Aloud to every man in the wilderness of sin, and the world.

3. Prepare ye the way of the Lord,

All the impediments to his coming, and presence in your souls, must be removed.—Do thou, O Lord, enable us to discover and remove them.

3. Make his paths straight.

The ways of all flesh are crooked before his coming.

4. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Viz.—By Christ, for whom John prepared the way by his baptism of repentance. Repentance therefore is the way, and only the way, to Christ; as there is no coming to him without it, so it has no efficacy of itself for the remission of sins, without bringing us to Christ. How plain is this! Without repentance there is no remission. When did we see our sin, so as to be pricked in our hearts for it? When did we repent? When did we come to Christ for remission?

5. And there went out unto him all the laud of Judæa, and they

of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

It is to be feared they did these things more in hypocrisy than from the heart. Outward baptism, and the confession of the lips, are easy things, but the truth of repentance, and inward cleansing, are painful work.

6. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

His habit and manner of living were suitable to his preaching.

7. And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

Without whom John's baptism, preaching, and exhortations, would be of no effect; repentance not being available to pardon, but through him. He works, that which both he and I preach, viz. repentance; and also faith, and newness of life, by baptizing with the Spirit. Let him come in his might to us, let us expect it, pray for it, and assure ourselves that nothing less than the grace and power of his Godhead can be our remedy.

8. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

The meaning is, he must, it is his prerogative, the peculiar glory of his dispensation, and our great happiness under him. If we stop short of this baptism, we lose all faith, love, and obedience, and do not know him in the very thing which makes him greater than John the Baptist, or all that went before him.

SECTION II.

Chap. i. ver. 9—15.

THE BAPTISM, TEMPTATION, AND PREACHING OF
CHRIST.

9. And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

Jesus needed not baptism unto repentance for himself; but being in the place of sinners, to show what was necessary to them.

10. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him :

The same happens to all who are rightly baptized, though they do not see it. But our infant baptism will be lost, if we do not take it upon ourselves, and answer the end of it in ourselves.*

11. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

And for his sake, with all who are in him by faith.

12. And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

He drove him into the wilderness that he might undergo all trials, to perfect his obedience as our pattern. This was a state of great humiliation. Let the children of God look for trials. Christ was their pattern herein. Let them not fear; for they too have angels ministering to them.

13. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan ;

* A pen is run over this sentence, and the words, " Never to depart till they force him from them," inserted after baptised : the ink is not the same, I think the hand is.—*Ed.*

As sure as ever we enter into Christ's process, we have the same enemy to encounter with.

13. And was with the wild beasts;

This was a state of great humiliation for the Son of God. His servants in the lowest condition of poverty, distress, and desertion, may derive support and comfort from hence.

13. And the angels ministered unto him.

At the end of the temptation, and when he had passed happily through it. If thou art an heir of salvation, bravely enduring thy trials, they likewise minister to thee, in God's time; and thou wilt one day know what service thou hast received from them.

14. Now after that John was put in prison,

As John was to be the forerunner of Christ, and is so prophesied of, his ministry must of necessity end, before that of Christ began.

14. Jesus came into Galilee,

This too was according to prophecy; and if Christ had not confined his ministry and teaching to Galilee, he would have wanted one mark or proof of his being the Messiah.

14. Preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

In which God receives us to grace and favour by the remission of sins, rules over us by Jesus Christ, and prepares us by the Spirit for his everlasting kingdom of glory. Do you understand this, and is it glad tidings, and sweet preaching to you, in your undone state? Have you entered or are you willing to enter into the kingdom of God for this end? Do you know, and believe that it must be set up in your souls, and come to you with power and blessings now, whilst you live, and that if you die out of it you perish eternally? Think of these things before you again go to sleep; and beseech God to awaken you to a sense of

your condition, in the want of the gospel, and the great mercy of deliverance, therein offered you.

15. And saying, The time is fulfilled,

That of life with *you*, if it pleases God. Be no longer hardened and unbelieving. Think what it is to die before this time comes.

15. And the kingdom of God is at hand :

To *you*, if you will hear your call, and see your day. God's kingdom of grace, as preparatory to his kingdom of glory. And no one comes to the latter, but by the former.

15. Repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Repent first, and then believe. We are saved by faith ; but repentance must pave the way for it ; and faith, when we have it, carries on and perfects our repentance.

SECTION III.

Chap. i. ver. 16—28.

CHRIST CALLETH PETER, ANDREW, JAMES, AND JOHN,
AND HEALETH ONE THAT HAD A DEVIL.

16. Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea : for they were fishers.

17. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me,

To be employed under him for the good of their fellow creatures, laying themselves out wholly upon the office of saving souls after his example, and receiving his instructions for that purpose. Has he any other method of calling and qualifying his ministers ? No, his rule is always

the same ; renounce all other pursuits, know your business in the world, study your pattern, behold, Jesus saith, "*Come ye after me !*"

17. And I will make you to become fishers of men.

At all times, and in all places ; to catch you in the net of the gospel, if you will hear Christ speaking by them.

18. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

His call was accompanied with a divine power : and no doubt this first miraculous touch of it upon their hearts would be remembered by them ever after, and be a means of keeping them steady to him. We too are called to follow him, though not as Apostles, and to forsake all as they did, yet to receive salvation from him, and to know what we must do for him. Take notice that Simon and Andrew, James and John, did not desire a moment's delay ; if they had, perhaps he would never have called them more. Think then whether you are following Christ, and what is your condition at this time.

19. And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

20. And straightway he called them : and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

21. And they went into Capernaum ; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

How hard would have been our condition, if nothing of what he taught had been left upon record ! And yet how many who call themselves his disciples, live and die in great ignorance of it !

22. And they were astonished at his doctrine : for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

It seems as if this was chiefly to be understood of something extraordinary in his appearance, and manner of

speaking: for Capernaum still continued a hardened place, and though his doctrine caused astonishment, we do not read that it was effectual to the conversion of many of his hearers. Let the teaching of Christ be authoritative to our hearts, and we shall experience the power of his doctrine in our conversion.

23. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit: and he cried out,

24. Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

He asks our Lord, saying, Art thou come to put an end to our power over mankind, or to punish us out of hand?

25. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

26. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

It is no great matter what we suffer in our healing by Christ, if we are but healed.

27. And they were all amazed,

Wonder at Jesus and all his miracles, is not conversion.

27. Insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

It is a happy thing when we can say this from our own knowledge and experience of the power of Christ in ourselves. Let us look to him for nothing less; otherwise all scripture will be lost upon us.

28. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

The fame of Jesus, and his miracles, is the ground of our faith in him, and the gospels were written to spread and establish it.

SECTION IV.

Chap. i. ver. 29—45.

CHRIST HEALETH MANY OF DISEASES, AND CLEANSETH
A LEPER.

29. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

30. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

31. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

The cure which Jesus wrought on Peter's mother-in-law, was miraculous in some of its circumstances; it was instant, and complete, and attended with immediate ability in the patient to minister to Christ, and to his disciples. In these particulars it serves to shadow out the healing of the soul from the guilt of sin: Christ speaks pardon, he heals the soul, and imparts strength to serve him in newness of life.*

32. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

They would not stay till the next day, for the cure of their bodies. We are in no such haste for our souls.

33. And all the city was gathered together at the door.

Happy are those who are drawn to the doors of God's house, by the report of his mercy in Christ Jesus to sinners.†

* The M.S. is here defective, and the Editor has supplied a note.

† Idem.

34. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils ; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

The devils owning him could be no credit to him, nor advantage to the truth, and therefore he would not suffer it.

35. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

Was he so concerned for a blessing on his work, and so diligent in the use of the best means, and have we not one prayer for our souls? Hear especially, O minister!

36. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.

37. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.

Nevertheless, he left them. they had as much of his time as he could spare, and might have made a saving use of his presence. He is always present with us, by his word and Spirit, until we provoke him to leave us. O that it could be said of us, *all seek for thee!*

38. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also : for therefore came I forth.

39. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

The labours of Christ were incessant : his miracles were intended to conciliate regard to his doctrines ; by these he glorified God his Father, and removed his wrath from those who repented and believed in him, and by those he demonstrated his good-will to men.—*Ed.*

40. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

We have all a worse leprosy cleaving to us, and are defiled and spotted all over with sin, till we receive our cure from Christ. This we shall do whenever we come to

Christ, with this saying in our mouths, and with earnest desire to be healed by him.

41. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will ; be thou clean.

42. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

Perhaps in no miracle of healing did Christ more clearly point out his will and power to remove the guilt and pollution of sin from those who should come to him by faith, for the healing of their souls. Let us go to him with this prayer, and we shall not be sent empty away.—*Ed.*

43. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away ;

44. And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man :

This was to avoid ostentation, and to set us a pattern of humility ; as well as for the reason mentioned in verse 45. Not that we are forbidden to speak of Christ at all times, to one another as we are able.

44. But go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

The cleansed man would thus yield obedience to a divine ordinance ; and he would exhibit a mark of the finger of God in his cure : the leprosy being supposed incurable by human means.

45. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places : and they came to him from every quarter.

We see here that the most serious inconvenience may arise to the usefulness of the ministers of the gospel of Christ, from the indiscreet zeal of those who have received mercy, through their means.—*Ed.*

SECTION V.

Chap. ii. ver. 1—12.

CHRIST HEALS THE SICK OF THE PALSÝ.

1. And again he entered into Capernaum after some days ; and it was noised that he was in the house.

Is he not here now, in this house, by his word, and Spirit? O that we were with him in will and desire for his blessings!

2. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

Whatever they came to him for he knew his own business, and what they wanted. “Herein he is an example to all ministers to the end of time.”—*Ed.*

3. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

But who can bring us to him? Christ himself, in the preaching of his gospel, and by his Spirit within us. But then while he is willing, bring thyself to him, O sinful, and diseased man, who art sick of a deadly distemper. Thou canst not please him better.

4. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

Sense and feeling of sin will put us upon trying every method to come at Jesus. And come at him we shall, if we are in earnest.

5. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

Jesus saw the faith of those who brought the man, and also the faith of the person himself for his bodily cure.

But he here reveals himself to them, and to all, in his better capacity of physician to the soul, and in such a manner as to show what he chiefly aimed at in his miraculous cures, namely, the spiritual recovery of mankind.

The paralytic had faith in Christ's power, and therefore the Saviour graciously extended it to the relief of all his wants; and when he healed him of one distemper, would not leave him under a worse. "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee," are sweet words to a fainting soul, and *here* spoken, once for all, to every believer. When a sense of sin presses hard upon thee, and thou art looking out every way for help, be not so much thy own enemy as to think they are not spoken to thee: thou mayest be taught by some to wait for a personal call, grant, or inward testimony, particularly assuring thee of it. But remember "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" Rom. x. 17; and it may never come to thee, if thou wilt receive it upon no other evidence than that of thy own feeling.

6. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7. Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

8. And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves,

This Jesus could not have done, if he had not been God as well as man. And observe from hence how clearly the hearts of all men lie open to him.

8. He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9. Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

Both were alike impossible to men, and both alike easy to Christ. Note from hence, that sin is more at the bottom of all our sicknesses than we think of. We cannot be mistaken in searching for it as the cause of them.

10. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins,

This miracle was wrought and recorded, that ye might know and believe this. And take especial notice that your sin must be forgiven you upon earth. As the tree falls, so it lies. When did you think of this? When did your sins give you any concern? When did you ever come with them to Christ for pardon?

10. (He saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11. I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

We now hear this that we may so wonder at Christ, in the power of his miracles, as to glorify God for our own conversion by him.

In reading the Scripture, do not let one story, or one miracle pass, without some application to yourselves. For instance, in the case of the paralytic; had he lost the use of his limbs? and am not I in a worse condition, and stand as much in need of healing? Yes, I am helpless and weak in my soul, my heart is insensible to God, my will is motionless, my affections are dead to heavenly things, till Christ restores them. Have I sins to be forgiven? Yes, more than the hairs of my head. Will they be forgiven? Yes, Christ wrought this, and all his miracles, that we might believe in him as the Saviour of sinners. Will he heal me, if I do not see, and confess my sin, and come to him for that purpose? No, I must desire it of him, with the same earnestness and concern, as if I wanted healing in my body, and knew that he would, and that he alone could, cure me.

SECTION VI.

Chap. ii. ver. 13—22.

LEVI IS CALLED, AND GIVETH A FEAST: WHY CHRIST'S
DISCIPLES DO NOT FAST.

13. And he went forth again by the sea side ; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

Your coming hither to hear his word, is resorting to *him*. If it is in sincerity, for a blessing. He is wherever his word is, and will make you know the power of his teaching.

14. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphæus sitting at the receipt of custom,

This was Matthew himself, attending upon the profitable trade of a publican, farmer, or collector of the public taxes.

14. And said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

Be astonished here. This was a greater miracle than the former. Matthew, who was such a worldling as to prefer gain to credit, (for the employment in which he was engaged was hateful among the Jews, more especially in a Jew,) at the call of Christ, had a new heart given him, and was changed into another man. Nevertheless, the same miracle must be wrought in every one of us. Neither do we want our call, yea many calls, but alas ! the world, and for the most part, a little of it,—a bare livelihood in it, effectually stops our ears, and hardens our hearts against it.

15. And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples : for there were many, and they followed him.

Sometimes the more open and notorious sinners come to true repentance, faith in Christ, obedience to the gospel,

and to a godly, righteous, and sober life, when the outwardly decent, in the pride of their hearts, turn from Christ and his pardoned disciples, with disdain. Beware, lest you dash against this rock, and so make shipwreck of your salvation.—*Ed.*

16. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners ?

If he was not thus condescending to sinners, what would become of us all ? Shut him not out of your hearts yourselves, and the foulness of them will not. No way to do it so effectually as thinking them clean, as the Pharisees did. To the question they put, he in effect returns answer, because he came into the world to save sinners, and his business was, and always is, with sinners. He disdains none as being sinners, if they are not so righteous in their own eyes as to despise him, and reject his help.

17. When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician,

Who is there amongst us so whole ? Or who is so great a sinner, as that Christ cannot make him whole ? that is, by cleansing him from the guilt of sin, and turning his will against it. No power however, even in God, can make an unrelenting sinner whole, so as to save him from punishment.

17. But they that are sick : I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The self-righteous, as such, cannot hear this call ; and therefore it is the same thing to them, as if they had it not. If you are ever so great a sinner, you have it in these words, and you may hear it : but then mark, it is to repentance. Never think of coming to Christ without a sense of sin, and a purpose to forsake it. Suppose any of you should hear him saying, I came not to call thee, would it strike cold to your hearts ? You do hear it now from his own

mouth, if you will not repent. And oh! what mercy, what love, that he should come himself from heaven to teach, and require it; and to make it effectual to our salvation!

18. And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

Probably they laid a great stress upon it, and made it a considerable part of their religion, in the room of better things.

19. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

20. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

Fasting is good; and verily there is a time for it. Christ says, When the bridegroom is taken from us. In the time of sickness and calamities; and especially when sin takes hold of us, we shall not make so light of this way of humbling ourselves before God, as we are wont to do.

21. No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; else the new piece that filled it up, taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

A piece of new, stiff cloth, if put on a garment old and thin, would tear itself out, and so the rent would be made worse.

22. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

Bottles, made of skins, which being old and stiff, would be apt to burst with the fermenting liquor. Christ knows perfectly how to condescend to our weakness, and here teaches us to suit our instructions to the condition and capacity of our hearers. But then he does not intend we should always continue weak.

SECTION VII.

Chap. ii. ver. 23—28.

CHRIST TREATS OF THE SABBATH-DAY.

23. And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day ; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

The act of Christ's disciples was sanctioned by the divine law, and therefore could not be found fault with ; for so it is written, Deut. xxiii. 25, "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand ; but thou shalt not move a sickle into thy neighbour's standing corn."—*Ed.*

24. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful ?

This was man's law, and one of those traditions which the Jews had invented to help them to a high conceit of themselves.

25. And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him ?

26. How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him ?

The whole relation is given in 1 Sam. xxi. 1—9. "Ahimelech was *high* priest when David took the shew-bread ; but Abiathar his son, was *chief* priest under him, and probably superintended the tabernacle and its stated concerns."—*Scott.—Ed.*

27. And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath :

For man's use and benefit, as a day of bodily rest, and of

spiritual labour ; but not intended to bind him up to any such strictness as would be hurtful to health or life.

28. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Certainly Christ had as good a right as David, or any other man, to dispense with it in cases of necessity. And farther, as God, who first appointed it, he had power to make what alteration he pleased concerning it.*

The Pharisees charge the disciples with breach of the sabbath in a small matter, Christ reproves them for it ; and withal establishes this rule in the case, that the sabbath may give way to necessity. But then let the necessity be evident. Christ has not here laid in any excuse for needless journeys, visiting, or sports, or any other way of idly or unprofitably spending the sabbath. *We* are not apt to overdo in point of strictness ; but need more to be cautioned against breaking or neglecting it. The sabbath was appointed not only that we might rest from bodily labour, but to be a day of sacred employment ; that we might be at leisure to worship God in public, to read his word and pray in private, to improve ourselves and families in religious knowledge, to take off our minds and wean our hearts from the world, to think upon and prepare for heavenly rest. Did you ever keep one such sabbath ? If you have not kept many such, what have you been doing in the world ? and what must convince you of sin, and bring you to God in repentance, if the notorious breach of this commandment does not ?

* The law of the sabbath is obligatory because of the author of it : that which commands love to God is founded in the nature of things, the former may be altered, not the latter.—*Ed.*

SECTION VIII.

Chap. iii. ver. 1—5.

THE WITHERED HAND HEALED.

1. And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

Verily it is our own condition in spiritual things, and our help is before us; but never comes till we know our want of it. The miracles of Christ can signify nothing to *us*, if we do not see them in this light, and look to have them verified in ourselves.

2. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.

So it is at all times; Christ's servants have always spies upon them, who are ready to take exception, watch for occasions of speaking evil of them, and cavil at the very best things which they do.

3. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

That seeing the condition he was in, they might abate of their malice and prejudice against Christ, for healing him, though on the sabbath-day. Stand thou forth, O sinner; present thyself before him with a true sense of thy condition, and desire to be healed, and doubt not of thy cure.

4. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil?

Observe, that in Christ's account, not to do good at all times when it is in our power, is to do evil. Not saving life or limb when we can, is maiming and killing.

4. To save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

They could make no reply to his question, and yet would not feel the force of it, but continued the same men. How

often is this our case? to be silenced by Christ, without being converted by him.

5. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts,

You see that the root and cause of Christ's anger was not pride or malice, as it is of ours, but divine compassion for their souls. O how dreadful it would be to think that he is now casting such a look of anger and sorrow upon any one of us! And yet so it is, while we harden our hearts against him; as we all do till we come to him under the influence of repentance for healing in his blood.

5. He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

This is an exact picture of *our* healing by Christ; and thus he, in effect, says to every one of *us*, Bring thyself, thy weakness, thy corrupt nature to *me*. And so we must and can do, at his bidding. But deliverance from the guilt of sin, and a new heart, are *his* work.

Hypocrites are strict in outward things, and so are good men too: they must not be neglected. A show of religion often covers an evil heart; but wherever there is inward soundness, the form of a man's life will certainly be answerable to it. The greatest exactness, indeed, in outward things does not make a Christian, but the want of them infallibly proves him to be none.

SECTION IX.

Chap. iii. ver. 6—19.

CHRIST CURES MANY, AND APPOINTS HIS TWELVE
APOSTLES.

6. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

If what we hear and know of Christ does not excite our belief in him, it will cause hatred of him.

7. But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judæa,

8. And from Jersusalem, and from Idumæa, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

He did great things then, that he might be trusted in for great things always; and the Gospels were written on purpose that we might all hear of him and come to him. Think for what; and if you do not discover that it is to do for you what you can never do for yourselves, depend upon it you have not yet found it out. Mock him not with the empty name of a *Saviour*, when you think that you have little or no need of him as your Saviour. Confess the truth; that smooth life and goodly appearance are but the work of your own hands; Christ was never called in to change the leopard's spots in your hearts, or to season them with the spirit of the ten commandments, and especially he was never called in to merit heaven for you.

9. And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

10. For he healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

Christ was not offended at their boldness, and eagerness to be healed: no more he will with ours. We cannot displease him more than by keeping ourselves at a distance from him.

11. And unclean spirits,

These were in the persons of those whom they possessed.

11. When they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

What could they be but real devils who said this? Surely not diseases, under that name, as some have fancied. This confession did not help *them*, but nothing else will do *us*

any good; and it is the fulfilling of all scripture in us, when we can speak it from the heart.

12. And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

That his enemies might not say that he was in league with them, and to avoid popularity. Both these reasons have now ceased: therefore speak of him as thou canst, and what thou knowest.

14. And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came to him.

14. And he ordained twelve,

These he appointed to be eye-witnesses of his miracles, to receive his instructions, and to copy his life; that they might be qualified for the work to which he was going to appoint them.

13. That they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

To preach Christ, and to send us to him. These are the men chosen of Christ to carry his name into all nations, to preach the glad tidings of salvation to a world dead in trespasses and sins, to plant his church, and to water it with their blood. How glorious and honourable are they now wherever the gospel is known, and what thanks do we owe to God for them!

15. And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

Observe, the power was given them by Christ, and did not die with them. It is still in the same hands, and we always have it to go to for every spiritual want, or distemper. And farther, if we never came to him with our sicknesses, feeling the plague of them, and imploring his help, we may be assured they are not yet healed.

16. And Simon he surnamed Peter;

Not now first, but some time before, when he was brought to him by his brother Andrew. John i. 42.

17. And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of

James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

18. And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Canaanite,

19. And Judas Iscariot which also betrayed him:

Alas! who can read the last name here mentioned, without trembling for himself, and praying, Hold thou me up, O Lord, and I shall be safe.—*Edit.*

SECTION X.

Chap. iii. ver. 19—35.

CHRIST REFUTES CALUMNIES, AND SHOWS WHO ARE HIS BRETHERN.

19. And they went into an house.

20. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

21. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

Christ far outstripped all in his compassionate sense of men's wants, and did not regard what inconveniences he suffered, so they might have the benefit of his preaching the word, and his healing them. His nearest friends could not keep pace with him in his zeal, and seem to have put a wrong construction upon his conduct.

22. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils casteth he out devils.

Behold the force of prejudice, and observe what pretences men can invent against the truth, when they will not own it. They would not be convinced that he had this power from God. This they had resolved upon beforehand; and

yet not being able to deny that it was more than human, with most astonishing absurdity they ascribed it to the devil himself.

23. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan ?

24. And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

25. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

26. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

27. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man ; and then he will spoil his house.

Who is it that must first bind the strong man in us all ? When you come to grapple with this enemy, and strive in earnest to cast him out of possession, you will soon find that you cannot do it of yourselves. The Scripture never fulfils God's design in you till you know this, know who will bind the evil spirit, and cast him out, and have grace given you to resolve that he shall.

28. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme :

“ All sins,” upon repentance for Christ's sake.

29. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation :

30. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

The miracles of Jesus were the strongest proofs of his being sent of God, which could be given. And they who resist this proof, and what is more, ascribe his miracles to Satan, are past conviction. Either they will not, or by the just judgment of God, shall not repent. Some are apt to fear in their despairing moods, that they have committed this sin against the Holy Ghost. Let them consider what it is, namely, ascribing Christ's miracles, wrought by the

power of the Spirit, to the devil, and they will perceive at once that they have not.

31. There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

32. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

33. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren ?

34. And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren !

What ! we poor worms of the earth ! sinful dust and ashes !—yes, if it is not our own fault. And he tells us how we may become so dear to him.

35. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Think not to claim kindred with Christ in any other way than that which is here mentioned, namely, by doing the will of God. If Christ does not bring us to this prayer, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we do not belong to him. Observe the order and manner of our salvation. We are first dead in trespasses and sins : the knowledge of this brings us to God, in repentance for the mercy of forgiveness by Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ purifies the heart, turns our wills against sin, and inclines us to do the will of God. And if our faith has not this effect, it is a dead faith ; we are yet in our sins. You have it now put to your choice, whether you will be Christ’s brethren, or the bond-slaves of Satan. Let him not put out your eyes : look, turn, come to Christ, and be saved.

SECTION XI.

Chap. iv. ver. 1—9.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

1. And he began again to teach by the sea side : and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea ; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

A happy gathering ! And yet you will see presently, in the parable of the sower, that all hearers are not doers. Whether there be many or few who gather themselves to Christ, to hear him speaking *now*, in his word, be *you* of the number ; and whatever you read or hear, do it in sincerity, to the end that you may profit by it : you will if you pray for a blessing.

2. And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

He taught them by similitudes, which convey instruction with the greater force ; because by a discovery of their hidden meaning we have in part the pleasure of teaching ourselves.

3. Hearken ;

Think yourselves present at the scene ; imagine that you see the divine teacher sit down in the ship, and the multitude standing before him in awful silence to receive his instructions. Do you besides listen with eager attention. That which Jesus taught them, is, by the good providence of God, before us ; and he says now, this moment, to every one of *us*, with a voice of authority, which should pierce our souls,—Hearken !

3. Behold, there went out a sower to sow :

4. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

5. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

6. But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

7. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

8. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred.

The beauty and simplicity of the parable before us are suited to arrest our attention, and to employ our thoughts. When we can contemplate the employments of the husbandmen, and keep out of our minds the depravity of those who pursue them, we find a sweet pleasure and satisfaction. And we do well to remember that the design of our Lord, in this parable, and in all his teaching, was to extract the poison of sin and depravity out of the hearts of all who hear of his miracles, and who learn his doctrine.—*Edit.*

9. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The words of Christ; the sweetest of all words, and what it concerns every man, above all things in the world, to hear and understand, and to lay to heart. What are we when we do not hear Christ? What will become of us if we do not receive his instructions with the undisputing simplicity of little children, and without a murmuring or opposing thought; knowing it to be the will of God for our salvation?

SECTION XII.

Chap. iv. ver. 10—20.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE.

10. And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

We cannot be too inquisitive in the things of Christ ; and it is a sure sign of a dead state when we are not.

11. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God :

He afterwards explained all to them, as he knew they would profit by it. His explanation is before us, and to us likewise it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God ; both what we could not know without its being revealed, and what we are required to know upon the peril of our own souls, now it is revealed. Let us resolve to know what the kingdom of God is, what are its blessings, and what we must do to belong to it, and then all will be plain and easy.

11. But unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables :

To men whose hearts are in the world, and not with Christ, he can never speak plain enough. Parables are parables to them. All is hidden from them. What they do know is useless, because they do not understand with the heart. And besides, God leaves them to themselves, and says they shall not see. This is a sad condition : the Lord deliver us from it !

12. That seeing they may see, and not perceive ; and hearing they may hear, and not understand ; lest at any time they should be converted,

This is the case of great numbers, who see the truth, and value themselves upon knowing it, but without any

saving effect, or impression. None but those who are converted, know what it is to perceive and understand. They know too, that once they did not.

12. And their sins should be forgiven them.

Remission of sins, through the blood of Christ, is one of the great mysteries of the kingdom of God, which is happily opened to us; and it is the great end of his teaching, and of our hearing, that we may see and consider our danger and misery in sin, and come to Jesus, in repentance, for forgiveness.

13. And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

He in effect says to us, this parable is comparatively easy; and withal so necessary to be known, that if we do not enter into the true spirit of it, so as to become obedient hearers, we shall hardly understand anything else.

14. The sower soweth the word.

Christ, and his ministers under him.

15. And these are they by the way-side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

In the turn of a thought; it may be while I am speaking it. He knows what all hearts are without the word. Do you know it too? Be upon your guard against Satan; and hold it fast, as you love your souls. He has no power to take it away, but just so far as you are willing to let it go.

16. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

We may have nothing to say against the word; nay, be pleased with it, and think well of our state because we hear it with some degree of delight, and yet have no soundness or root of a true life in us. If it enters deep into our hearts, lays us low in our own eyes, and brings us to faith

in Christ, this is a good foundation, and will abide the trial.

17. And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

These observations show the influence of religion, which obtains wherever the gospel is preached with success. These persons bid fair, while supported by the influence arising from riches, power, and worldly success; but when these are withdrawn from the church, those who seemed to love religion for its own sake are offended, and forsake the martyrs and confessors of the Saviour. Such seasons of trial will come upon the church in every age and place; and then the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.—*Edit.*

18. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

19. And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Here is ruin and destruction plainly set before us; and the most general and fatal cause of men's not profiting by the word: the world chokes it. Not only the sinful pleasures of it, but its cares and occupations. How many are caught in this snare! how common is it for men to make their business an excuse for not saving their souls! and how few set themselves in good earnest to root out these choking thorns!

20. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

Awakened, believing, steady souls, who have discovered the natural deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of their hearts, come to Christ for healing by his blood, and in the Holy Spirit's power keep close to him in obedience. These are the hearers whom God approves.

All true believers do not bring forth the same measure of fruit, yet all according to their capacities and opportunities; and the measure of the Spirit given unto them. Inquire not whether others have more or less fruit than yourself, but consider what you can and ought to do.

SECTION XIII.

Chap. iv. ver. 21—29.

DIVINE KNOWLEDGE IS TO BE COMMUNICATED: PARABLE OF THE GROWING SEED, AND ITS FULL MATURITY.

21. And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

22. For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

As if he had said, you have now the explanation of the parable; hide it not within yourselves, but let others have the benefit of your knowledge: and moreover let it not lie dead within you, without some fruit appearing, but let your light shine out, for the benefit of those among whom you live.

23. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

Let him hear with profit to himself, and in order to impart to others what he hears and knows.

24. And he saith unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.

Do not let that you hear lie useless or unimproved for your own and others' benefit.

The increase of gifts and grace will be according to the improvement we make of our attainments and opportunities of benefiting the souls of others. In these things, "he that withholdeth more than is meet, it tendeth to

poverty :” but he who layeth himself out to serve the Lord Christ, shall have more ability to help forward his kingdom, and to secure his own salvation.—*Edit.*

25. For he that hath,

He that uses and diligently labours to improve what he possesses, for the good of himself and his fellow-creatures,

25. To him shall be given :

A greater abundance now, and in the world to come much more than he can conceive.

25. And he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

That which he hath had given him, but lets it lie idle, and contrary to the design of its being given him. The man who keeps it *to* himself, shall not long have it *for* himself, to any saving purpose : what he hath shall be taken from him. It is a very important lesson which is taught in these verses, namely, that the way to keep and increase what we learn in the school of Christ, is to communicate it to others.

26. And he said, So is the kingdom of God,

This is plainly not his eternal kingdom in heaven, but his kingdom of grace upon earth ; which embraces his power and work in the souls of men. The parable teaches us that we must sow the seed, or receive it into our hearts when Christ sows it ; and that is all we can do, the rest is God’s work.

26. As if a man should cast seed into the ground ;

In hopes of a crop, and with earnest desire to see his work prosper. Sow thus for your souls ; and sow you must, or else nothing is to be looked for. Those who do not sow will never reap.

27. And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

Leave all quietly, and securely to God. So it is in our spiritual husbandry. Till and sow, hear the word, and

open and prepare your hearts to receive it, and you may rise up and lie down in peace. If your wills and prayers are with God, for the growth of it, the harvest will certainly follow in his appointed time.

28. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

This is brought to pass, not without man's endeavours; but without his power, and in a way unknown to him. So is grace in the heart, the work is going forward in God's hands, but in a manner secret to us as the growth of the corn. Blast it not thyself, and God surely will not. It may have many a stop, and perish at the last; but whose fault is it?*

29. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

God knows his time of reaping, and will not stay a day too long. Let us but be fit for it, and then we need not care how soon it comes. In the book of the Revelation, xiv. 18, there is mention made of two sickles, one to reap the harvest, namely, God's children; the other to reap the vintage, namely, the wicked, for condemnation. You have the choice of the two sickles: may God prepare you for the right one!

* This sentence shows the opinion of Mr. Adam in the year 1757. I am inclined to think that Mr. Adam did not altogether maintain the abstract doctrine of the final extinction of grace in the heart where it had been implanted by the Holy Spirit. The Rev. R. Storry says, Mr. Adam held both "election and perseverance in a way of his own."—*Edit.*

SECTION XIV.

Chap. iv. ver. 30—41.

PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED : CHRIST STILLETH THE
TEMPEST.

30. And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

31. It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth :

Our beginning in grace is small, and next to nothing ; but if there be the life and virtue of a seed in it, it will, with God's blessing, grow and prosper beyond our hopes. Faith is that seed.

32. But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches ; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

The contrast between the small seed and the large herb produced therefrom, marks the abundant fruits of the Spirit, which the almost invisible seed of the word yields, when it is sown in a heart before prepared of God for its reception. The plant of grace, however small it is when it is planted in the heart by the Holy Ghost, will grow large and fair, and shadowy : “ But every plant,” says Christ, “ which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted out.”
—*Edit.*

33. And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.

Jesus suited himself to their capacities, and taught them in such a manner as best to answer the end of his instructions.

A parable, when it is understood, enters deeper into our minds and takes faster hold of us, than a plain discourse. All is in the application. Let each one of you ask himself, What am I? Shall I account myself a way-side hearer,

or a downright worldling, busy about everything but the one thing needful? Have I received the good seed of the word into my heart, and committed the growth of it, in faith and prayer, to God?

34. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

Even so, Lord Jesus, do thou expound all things to us, by speaking them to our hearts.

Matt. xiii. 15. None but those who are converted and healed know what it is to understand with the heart.

35. And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

36. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

37. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

38. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

So we are apt to think when we are in trouble, that God does not regard us, and especially when spiritual trouble has raised a storm within us. But though Christ suffers his servants to come into danger for their good, he knows how to deliver them.

39. And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

And is he not as marvellous in changing *us*? To set our wills against sin, to bring down our pride, to persuade us to exchange our hatred and selfishness for love, and our boisterous passions for meekness, to take our hearts from the world, and make us heavenly-minded, is not less wonderful, than to speak a storm into a calm.

40. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

This passage is for fearful and desponding Christians; they do ill, and are great enemies to themselves, in doubt-

ing and fearing. And Christ here rebukes them for it, but nevertheless he will not leave them to perish.

41. And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

It is a happy circumstance when we can say, from some experience of what he hath wrought in us, "What manner of man is this?" If, however, he does not do more for us, it is because we are insensible of what we want from him, and do not ask it of him. What was it that awoke him? was it not this cry, "Lord, save us, we perish." But this is too humble a prayer for us, and the generality had rather perish than submit to it.

SECTION XV.

Chap. v. ver. 1—9.

A MAN POSSESSED WITH DEVILS.

1. And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

3. Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

Bring thyself to this passage of Scripture, and let it strike up a light within thee. Thou art the man, and God himself hath not been suffered to bind thee with the fetters and chains of his law. See, how thy heart rises against it, and in how many instances thou art a breaker of it.

4. Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

5. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

Every sinner is a greater madman, and does greater mischief to himself.

Who would not have thought this poor man's case desperate? And yet Satan must give way when a stronger than he comes upon him. Learn from hence to conceive highly of the power of Christ; and that though your corruption is strong, and your sins many, he will certainly pity your condition, and work your cure, when you come to him for that purpose. Do not pretend to help and heal yourself. The man could as soon have cast out his legion of devils, amounting to some thousands, as you can cast out one without Christ.

6. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

Acknowledging his power, and beseeching him not to give him up immediately to his punishment: for the devils do not suffer the whole of their torments, but are reserved "unto the judgment of the great day." Jude v. 6. We have our choice, whether we will be of their number, and be doomed to their misery in that day, or accept the mercy of a Saviour now.

7. And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God?

It is a dreadful thing to say this, and yet every unconverted man does say it from the bottom of his heart; for so long as he cleaves to his corruption, Christ can be nothing but a torment to him. When Christ tells a sinner that he must give up all, and let all go; the answer is, no; for this would be death to him. And when any one of us refuses to know himself according to the light of Scripture, is not this saying in effect, "What have I to do with thee?" In any one instance you may go a great way with Jesus, and think yourselves very sincere: but if you shrink from him, with an exception, or reservation, in any

one respect, he knows that to be the language of your heart. That one thing is the test of your sincerity, and not a thousand others, which cost us little or no self-denial.

7. I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

It is a sore trial, and will put the soul hard to it, when the devil is to be cast out in some darling lust. Christ deals with thee about thy bosom sin, and the necessity of giving up every sin, and does thy heart refuse its consent? His will is evidently thy plague, and thou sayest this very thing to him, "I adjure thee—torment me not." Some continue in this mind a shorter, some a longer time, and many always.

8. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

He commanded every one of them to come out of him. He would not leave one behind to torment the man. So he would, so he must say to the earthly, sensual, devilish nature,—to every lust in us: for one devil, one sin, is enough to make us miserable. And so he will say, when we desire it of him in faith, knowing our condition.

9. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

This is the name of sin in us. Jesus spake the truth; let us confess it too.

SECTION XVI.

Chap. v. ver. 10—20.

HE IS HEALED.

10. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

11. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

12. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

It appears from hence, that it is some ease to the devils, and a mitigation of their torments, to be in the bodies of men, and other animals. Instead of prying farther into this matter, let us be careful to keep them out of ourselves. They may have possession of our bodies oftener than we think of; and they certainly have possession of our souls when we give way to their temptations.

13. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

14. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

Ver. 10—14.—Why Jesus complied with the request of these devils, in suffering them to enter into, and destroy the swine, we cannot certainly know. No doubt the owners of them deserved this punishment. The loss indeed of their swine, if they would have understood it, might have been a gain to them. We may learn hence that the devil has no power of his own, and cannot hurt us without God's permission. And he has no power given him, but as we consent to it, by first withdrawing ourselves from God.

15. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

Are we in our right mind? Jesus brings us all to this. No man, however, is in his right mind until he makes his soul his first care. And no man does that until he thinks in good earnest with himself what he must do to be saved: until he turns to God in repentance, humility, and prayer, and sues out his pardon in the name of Christ. Has then

the same Jesus, who only can, brought *you* to your right mind? Then you are thankful to God for him; you make your soul your first care: you have his rule always before you: you keep a strict watch over your heart. You pray, you think it as great folly to return to your former state of unbelief, and alienation from God, as it would have been in this recovered man to invite the legion of devils into him again.

16. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

17. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

Instead of considering the miracle which he had done, and reaping the benefit of his presence, their hearts were hardened, notwithstanding what they had seen and heard, like all others who value their worldly goods more than Christ.

18. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

This is a proof of conversion, when we desire to be with Jesus:—when we gladly receive his instructions, and cleave to him, in our wills and affections, from a sense of his love, and knowing how great and good he is to us.

19. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

As Jesus could stay no longer in that country himself, he judged it proper that the man should remain there, to publish what the Lord had done for him; and especially to make this known to his friends and acquaintance, as he knew it would be natural for him to do.

20. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him:

When you know Christ, be not afraid to speak of him to others. Who knows but you may save a soul?

20. And all men did marvel.

So may you upon hearing this miracle; but he wants improvement from you, and application of what you hear and read, and not stupid admiration only. Jesus came into the world to do great things for us all. Ask yourselves, what has he done? what one thing did you ever desire him to do for *you*?

Ver. 1—19.—The great end of all Christ's miracles was that he might prove himself to be sent of God to be the Saviour of the world, and the great prophet to teach us the way to salvation, and to bring us to heaven. They have, then, their proper effect upon us, when they excite our belief in him, as the Son of God, and the only Saviour of sinners. One use and design of them is, that we may see something of our own case in all the cures he performed, and go to him for the help we need. It is by this self-application, looking narrowly into our hearts, and considering how far we ourselves are concerned in everything we read, that we may get life and nourishment from the Scripture. We are the leper in chap. i., the paralytic in chap. ii., the man with the withered hand in chap. iii. And as to the account before us,—have *we* no devils to be cast out? no stubborn opposition to the will of God? no uncleanness? no pride, nor malice? no hatred? no revenge? no worldliness? no drunkenness? no cursing and swearing? no lying or evil-speaking devil? It is by these unhappy tempers of our corrupt nature, that the devil gets possession of us, and has full power over us. And if we never came to Christ to have these works of the devil destroyed, he is still in us. He need not make us rage outwardly, or make us cut and mangle ourselves, to prove it; he works our destruction not the less surely for doing it secretly.

SECTION XVII.

Chap. v. ver. 21—34.

THE WOMAN HEALED OF THE BLOODY ISSUE.

21. And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea.

22. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

23. And besought him greatly,

Oh! this is the way to come at all we want; and take notice there is no other. It is a full proof of an unconverted state, when we can keep all quiet within us, without going to Jesus, and telling him of our trouble. Now, therefore, ask yourselves, whether you ever fell down at his feet, so much as once in your whole life, to beseech him greatly, in the distress of your souls, to help you.

23. Saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death:

The case of every soul, in its natural state, before Jesus comes to it.

23. I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

24. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

Jesus complies with all upon the same kind of request as this man made. Sense of our want of him brings us to him for help, and he never denies it to those who so ask it of him.

25. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

26. And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

We may draw a very important lesson of instruction from hence. If you feel the plague of sin in your souls, go directly to Jesus. When men are first awakened to see their lost condition as sinners against God, they are all for doing great things for themselves, and would gladly be working for life. Know, it is in vain, and that you will be no better, but farther from a cure, till you apply to Jesus. You can as easily make a world, as remove one sin from the heart without him: and where else will you go with the guilt of all sin?

27. When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

Perhaps she had heard of one or two of Christ's miracles. We have a great many of them before us in the gospels, and yet some of us do not go to him for healing. Sin cleaves to us three, or four times twelve years, without our being troubled at it. We deny it, and make ourselves whole, and so long as we pursue this scheme, we cannot take one step to Christ.

28. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

This is an admirable picture of true faith. It knows all its help is in Christ, makes no doubt that he has help enough for it, and that he certainly will help it. How plainly does this speak to us all, and in effect says to us, be not afraid, only believe in Christ for a cure. But then let us not fancy that we believe, when we have no feeling of our disease.

29. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

30. And Jesus immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

31. And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

Jesus was not diverted from his purpose of mercy to the

woman, by this unseasonable interruption of his disciples. Let us hence learn to possess ourselves in peace and quiet of mind, in every circumstance of life.—*Ed.*

32. And he looked round about

What do you think when you hear these words? Would not any one of you give the world, that he was now looking round about for you?

32. To see her that had done this thing.

This is the sum of Scripture, and the sole end of its being written, to bring us to this knowledge and belief. Hear then, and the Lord awaken you. O how happy you will be in full desire! O how happy in the full experience of this power!

33. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her,

And cannot we know what is done for us, when we find our hearts turned within us? When we see ourselves undone without Christ, when we fly to him in our distress, thankfully receive him as our Saviour, and cleave to him in sincerity?

33. Came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

Can not some one of us say, Lord, I have long been in an evil case, wanted healing, came to thee for it in faith, and thou hast healed me. Those whom Christ heals, are not shy of confessing the truth. Unawakened persons are all upon shifts and excuses to hide their sins from themselves and others.

34. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole;

It was precisely faith in his power and goodness for her healing, and nothing else would have made her whole. And the substance of faith is always the same, namely, “of things hoped for;” but since the death of Christ, and his

full opening of the gospel by the apostles, with a peculiar reference to the remission of sins through blood-shedding, and acceptance with God for his sake.

34. Go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

This is for all who truly believe. Here are the very words, just as Christ spake them, and they are written for our comfort. Know thy plague: believe in Christ; and this saying assuredly belongs to thee, this very moment, as much as it did to her, to whom it was spoken.

SECTION XVIII.

Chap. v. ver. 35—43.

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER RAISED TO LIFE.

35. While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

They did not know with whom they had to do. Let it be our care to learn from hence, to know Jesus better, and never think our case desperate, till Jesus has lost his power. For here in what follows is another remarkable instance of it.

36. As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

Observe, this cannot be said to one who feels no distress, knows no fear, and has no reason in himself for believing. To those who are awakened to a sense of their danger, misery, and helplessness, it is sweet encouragement, and all little enough to dispel their fears, and to confirm their faith. But, O thou enemy to thyself, what more wouldest thou have, and why wilt thou not take the Saviour at his word?

37. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

The Rock and the two Sons of Thunder, may follow him : chap. iii. ver. 16, 17. He would have a few chosen witnesses of the miracle, to report it at the proper time, and no more than these three ; to prevent the noise and tumult it might have occasioned, as at that time it would have had no other effect upon the multitude than to put them upon declaring for his temporal Kingship. And for the same reason he straitly demanded of those who were present at it, not to make him known : ver. 43. He knew his enemies would be ready to fasten a charge of sedition, and worldly view upon him ; and as nothing could be more contrary to his pretensions, his real character, and the whole design of his religion, he was particularly careful to avoid it. Compare Luke xxiii. 5. ; John xviii. 33 ; xix. 12 ; Acts xvii. 7.

38. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.

39. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep ? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

Not dead to continue so ; but immediately to awake, as from sleep.

40. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

41. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi ; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

O my soul, what is Jesus, his birth, his miracles, and almighty power to thee, if thou dost not hear this voice, in thy effectual conversion, and rising from thy death in trespasses and sins !

42. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked ; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

43. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

The life which Christ gives, he maintains.

Ver. 35—43.—Here is another instance of Christ's mighty power, miracle upon miracle, to raise and assure our faith in him. The poor trembling sinner, overwhelmed with a sense of his guilt, is apt to say, can Christ save? Yes, as sure as he cast out a legion of devils, as sure as the woman was healed by a touch of his clothes, as sure as he raised the ruler's daughter from the dead, with a word speaking. Look at these passages of Scripture, not as the history of some things done and past, but as the continued present words of Jesus to the world. Consider them, as your present call, to make a deep search into yourselves, and as the earnest of his salvation to all.

SECTION XIX.

Chap. vi. ver. 1—13.

CHRIST SENDETH OUT THE TWELVE.

1. And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

They saw what he did, and could not help admiring his wisdom, and yet were unconvinced and unconverted by him:—they perished with their eyes open. Belief in the heart is a different thing from wondering at Christ, and, in a sort, owning him.

3. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

As all are, for some reason or other, whatever they may think, who do not truly believe in him. God knows their hearts, and has that grievous sin to lay to their charge, that they are offended at Christ.

4. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

Christ, though without sin, was a man, and they fixed their eyes wholly upon the meanness of his birth and kindred, and were blind to the prophet. What must his ministers expect?

5. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

Their unbelief hindered him, as it always will. We tie up his hands, by the hardness of our hearts.

6. And he marvelled because of their unbelief.

And has he not cause to marvel at us of this* place? Ask yourselves, one by one; does he now see *me* this moment in unbelief? and is he wondering at *me*? May God in infinite mercy deliver us from so great a judgment!

6. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

If we knew that Christ was going about preaching in this neighbourhood, the generality would flock to hear him. We have the words he preached; and if we do not hear them, we should not have regarded him. It is the Holy Spirit working with our wills, which does all.

Ver. 1—6. You see, in this passage of Scripture, how easily men catch at pretences for not believing in Christ. Notwithstanding his miracles, and the power of God visible in them, they could see nothing in him, but the car-

* Wintringham, in the county of Lincoln.—*Ed.*

penter's son, and the poverty of his birth. You may, possibly, reject Christ for reasons every whit as trifling. You say, you do no harm, and so never see your sin; or you say, that others are worse,—or that you are unlearned,—or that your daily business will not allow you time to think of Christ, and your souls. Look into your hearts; for all is unsound within us, so long as we stand upon these, or any other pretences. Whatever keeps us from Christ is miserable blindness, and self-deceit.

7. And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth two by two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

What a mercy is it that he can, and will, give thee power over thy own spirit!

8. And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only: no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:

The meaning is, that they should enter immediately upon their work, and trust to Providence without spending time to make preparation, or to lay in provision for their journey. Does not this teach us that the ministers of the gospel, at all times, must be free from the cares of a maintenance, and have it found for them, that they may be at liberty to attend wholly to their office? And woe be to them if they do not!

9. But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.

10. And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

11. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them.

To declare in the strongest manner, the extreme danger of their condition, and God's utter rejection of them.

11. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhæ in the day of judgment, than for that city.

It shall be more tolerable for the worst, and most wicked

heathen. Think of this, ye who live where the gospel is preached. And observe, that, though there is a difference in the degrees of punishment, in another world, yet the least is intolerable.

12. And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

That all men should repent, except there ever was a man upon earth who needed no repentance. But there is no other way of coming to Christ, and the man who never repented from his heart, seeing himself lost and undone in sin, whatever he may think, does not yet believe in him.

13. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

Not by anointing them with oil, according to the custom of the Jews, but in the virtue of Christ's commission to them, and by his power going along with it. The medicines we take might still do miracles,* if we trusted more to Christ, than to them. Certain it is, that without God they can do nothing, however well chosen and adapted to the case.

SECTION XX.

Chap. vi. ver. 14—28.

HEROD, AND JOHN BAPTIST'S DEATH.

14. And king Herod heard of him ; (for his name was spread abroad :) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.

* The word miracles is perhaps rather too strong an expression but the term may have a harmless meaning.—*Ed.*

15. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.

16. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, it is John, whom I beheaded : he is risen from the dead.

17. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife : for he had married her.

18. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

“It is not lawful for thee.”—This is a hard saying to a sinner. Tell a man he is so, and wherein, and if he does not repent, he will never forgive.

19. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him ; but she could not :

20. For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him ; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

Perhaps Herod feared John more before his reproof of him, than after.* However, so we do by Christ. We fear him in some degree, know him to be just and holy, observe him, hear him gladly, and do many things at his bidding, and yet are not converted *to* him, and by him. The sense of good and evil which we have naturally ; the startling of conscience now and then, and doing some, yea many things for Christ, as we think, is not conversion. Conversion is seeing our sin, repenting from our hearts, coming to Christ for forgiveness, and for a new will to please him. Till we know such a work as this, corrupt nature prevails in us, and not grace.

21. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birth-day made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee ;

22. And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod, and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.

* Vide Whitby *in loco*.

23. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

24. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

25. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

26. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

John had galled Herod's conscience, by speaking the truth, and therefore it is likely that at the bottom he was glad at the pretence for taking him out of the way; or else he would soon have perceived that this oath was not binding. Wicked men seldom want a reason for doing ill; and the devil sometimes helps them to a goodly one.—*Note.* All have Herod's blindness, and hug sin in their bosoms, till grace opens their eyes.

27. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,

28. And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

In the character and description of Herod, we may see that conviction is not conversion. And perhaps we may discover something of ourselves in him, though we do not commit murder as he did.

SECTION XXI.

Chap. vi. ver. 29—46.

CHRIST FEEDETH FIVE THOUSAND WITH FIVE LOAVES
AND TWO FISHES.

29. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

The disciples honoured John with a decent burial. The treatment and end of John the Baptist, constitute one of the great mysteries of a divine providence; and an argument for the probability of a resurrection from the dead.—*Edit.*

30. And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

31. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

The necessities which pertain to humanity are graciously consulted for by our Saviour. He made it his meat and drink to do his Father's will; but he did not design to press so heavily upon his disciples; nor will he be unmindful of our wants and necessities.—*Edit.*

32. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

33. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran a-foot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.

34. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd.

So he is still towards all, even towards you. He did not leave his compassionate heart behind him, when he went to heaven. But his compassion towards us does not take effect till we have pity on ourselves; and we never have, till we know ourselves in some measure as he knows us,—sinful creatures and perishing without his help.

34. And he began to teach them many things.

What has Christ taught you? To know God, to know yourselves, and to be happy in God's favour? This is a blessed teaching indeed! And unless we have this knowledge, what can it profit us that he ever came into the world? He had compassion on them, and why? because of their ignorance, and want of teaching, and true teachers.

And what was the effect of his compassion? He endeavoured to remove their ignorance; he knew it would not excuse them, and therefore did not leave them to perish in it.

35. And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:

36. Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat:

37. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat.

You, his ministers. Look with *his* eye of pity,—of pity on the wants of your flocks, and withhold not what he puts into your hands for them. If it is but a little, he can increase it. Let all beseech it for themselves, to give the word of command for their spiritual nourishment.

37. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?

The disciples were yet weak in faith, though they had seen Christ's miracles, and had been enabled by him to do the same; they considered not that a desert-place, and want of bread, were nothing to him. So a convinced sinner, in his strait and need of all things, finds it hard to believe in Christ's power.

38. He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

39. And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

40. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.

They were hungry, and did not need to be bidden twice. What is the reason that we are so backward to feed upon Christ's better meat,—his word,—himself,—his blessed body and blood in the sacrament of his supper? It is because we do not feel a want within ourselves: our hunger and thirst are for other things.

41. And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed,

So should we, since every morsel we put into our mouths must be blessed to us, or else bread will nourish us no more than a stone. Let us not fail to bless God for our food, and to ask his blessing upon it, after Christ's example.

41. And brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them ; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

42. And they did all eat, and were filled.

Does not God work a miracle equally wonderful before our eyes continually ? Does he not multiply a few grains sown in the earth into a great number ? Is not this as plain a proof of his presence and power, as it was of Christ's, when he multiplied the loaves and fishes ? But who regards common benefits, so as to consider them duly, and say, God is here, and let us be thankful for them !

43. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

44. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

45. And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

46. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

He sent them away, that he might be at leisure to perform a still better office for them ; knowing that it would be no intermission to his work, but the way to carry it on effectually. Prayer is for help from above ; and this example should be instead of a thousand arguments to convince us of our want of help, and the necessity of prayer in order to obtain it. Never think yourselves in earnest, till you pray in earnest : never give over praying till you are more righteous than Christ.

SECTION XXII.

Chap. vi. ver. 47—56.

CHRIST WALKETH ON THE SEA.

47. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

48. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them :

If you are diligently employed about your proper work, though it may seem to go on heavily, you may rest assured that Jesus has his eye upon you for good.

48. And about the fourth watch of the night he cometh to them,

Christ will come to his saints in his own time. In every trial leave all quietly to him.

48. Walking upon the sea.

In the demonstration of his power; believe and trust in it.

48. And would have passed by them.

He seemed as if he took no notice of them, though what he did was for their sakes, and to make their deliverance more welcome. Think of this in a time of darkness, or desertion.

49. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed that it had been a spirit, and cried out :

50. For they all saw him, and were troubled.

When Christ comes to help his saints in their distress, the first feeling they have is frequently that of fear.—*Edit.*

50. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

These are precious words to one whose heart is faint on account of his sins. Christ is still the same, and, if we

trust in him, he will carry us safely through all storms and difficulties.

51. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

Behold the effects of Christ's presence, and manifestation of himself. Nature is calmed, but the unbelieving heart is full of amazement. Look however for his presence in thy soul, in faith and holiness, and fear shall be cast out.

52. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their hearts were hardened.

They saw the power of Christ, and could not but own it, and yet did not truly believe. Knowledge is not faith. Knowledge is in the head, but faith is in the heart; and it is God's work there.

53. And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

54. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,

55. And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

So eager ought we to be to come to him for our spiritual healing.

56. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment:

They gave Jesus glory by trusting to his power to heal them even by a touch, and he honoured their faith.—*Edit.*

56. And as many as touched him were made whole.

So shall we, if we can only touch him with the hand of faith. May the Lord enable us so to do, for the sake of Jesus Christ!

SECTION XXIII.

Chap. vii. ver. 1—13.

FAULT IS FOUND WITH CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

1. Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

2. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.

3. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

4. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, of brasen vessels, and of tables.

5. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

6. He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written,

That is, in his prophecy he has exactly described all such hypocrites as you are. We read the Scriptures as becomes us, when we take to ourselves what belongs to us, though originally it may have been spoken of others.

6. This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

Observe what hypocrisy is; it is an outward show of religion when the heart is not turned to God. Consider, therefore, in all thy worshipping of God, where thy heart is. Thou art a miserable man, if he sees it separated from thy lips!

7. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

8. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

The mere inventions of men in religion, though they come under the specious pretext of traditions, are at best but frivolous; and when they are substituted in the place of better things, or interfere with plain commands, they are of all deceits the most dangerous. Look carefully whether *you* lay aside the commandment of God, and wherein. If you do in any one instance, the world itself cannot furnish you with an excuse; nothing will stand you in any stead.

9. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

He charges them with a very serious fault, in setting up a false pretence for rejecting the commandment of God. Christ indeed here comes home to them, and shows them what sad work they made of a plain commandment.

10. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother : and, Whoso curseth father and mother, let him die the death :

Here perhaps some of you would congratulate yourselves, and say that you never spoke evil of your father or mother; meaning the cursing them in words. But observe, that in God's account, who sees the heart, not honouring them in thought, word and deed; and especially not succouring them in their need, is cursing them; and death is our desert! O! what shall we do with these hearts of ours, when he enters into judgment with us in this, and in other respects.

Observe, therefore, that Christ here opens the fifth commandment in its full extent, and goes to the root of sin in the heart. We are deplorably short-sighted in both these respects; and from hence it comes to pass that we continue ignorant of our state. We are content to observe only the outside, or bare letter of the commandment, and do not look for sin in ourselves, where God does.

11. But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.

As if a man should say, I have already given it to God;

or, I am under a vow not to give it to thee, and therefore can no more do it than if I had devoted it to God; so making the breach of a command a plain matter of conscience, and yielding it over with a show of sanctity. What pretence shall we find either for hoarding or spending in an extravagant manner, that which the wants of father or mother demand.

12. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

How could they curse them more effectually?

13. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

Not only they, but we, in some respect or other. Do not think yourself unconcerned in what you read, and put all off to others.

Ver. 1—13. In this passage we learn how apt men are to deal deceitfully with God and their souls; and to pride themselves in doing some trifling things of their own invention, instead of having a conscientious, sincere regard to his holy commands. Thus the Pharisees thought it a high point of religion to wash their hands before meat, without considering what a foul inside they had; and to devote some part of their substance to God, though in so doing they left father and mother to starve. You may not offend just in the same particulars, but the same kind of deceit lies lurking at the hearts of all men; and you may in other respects mock God, and cheat yourselves with the shadows of piety, instead of the substance. So if a man should say, I have been baptized; I go to church; I say my prayers; I give alms; and these are things which are more than many can say: yet all this may be, and men never know the work of a true repentance, nor come to that faith which purifies the heart. Men may be just such Pharisees and such self-deceivers as these of which we have been reading.

SECTION XXIV.

Chap. vii. ver. 14—23.

WHAT DEFILES A MAN.

14. And when he had called all the people unto him,

You may think that when you are assembled on the Sunday by the minister of Christ, that Christ hath, as it were, called you, and that you are assembled to listen to his instructions.

14. He said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand :

And we have need of the exhortation ; for though what Jesus says in the following verses is very awakening, and it nearly concerns our souls, we are naturally blind to it, and dull of understanding.

15. There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him, can defile him : but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

A little soil in eating, brings no religious defilement. The things which come out of a man are those which defile him, and what they are Christ will tell us to our great astonishment.

16. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

Let him hearken to that which it concerns every man so greatly to understand. But it is to be supposed that Christ had a further meaning : he wished to intimate that few *would* hear and understand.

17. And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

18. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also ?

We should be ready to think that what Christ had said

was plain enough. But nothing is understood until it is received into the heart. Do you understand, or do you not? Not only hearing and thinking with yourselves, this is plain; but considering, believing, digesting, and laying it to heart. Observe also the mildness of Christ's reproof, and condescension to their slowness; but observe too that they showed a desire to learn.

18. Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;

19. Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

It is to the heart! the heart, that God looks! God looks nowhere else, hardly any man looks there enough; and most men never.

20. And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

21. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22. Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Do you think Christ only means that these things, wherever they are, came first out of the heart? This is true; but then he means a great deal more, namely, that they are in the hearts and souls of all men, though they do not know it: this is their nature, till it has been brought before God in repentance, and in some measure purged by his holy Spirit. Unless you first learn this lesson from Christ, you will learn nothing else from him. What a foul sink of pollution, and all manner of wickedness, is the heart of man! And what need have we all of forgiveness and cleansing!

Ver. 14—23. We have seen that that which makes us polluted in God's sight is within; and we are naturally full of it, far beyond what we can conceive or imagine.

SECTION XXV

Chap. vii. ver. 24—37.

A CANAANITES' DAUGHTER AND DEAF-MAN HEALED.

Ver. 24—30. In this woman we have a lively representation of the workings of a penitent soul in distress: it comes hungering and thirsting to Christ, knows its wants, pleads hard for relief, trusts in him for it, and will take no denial.

24. And from hence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into a house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.

25. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

26. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

How will the coming of this woman to Christ, upon the hearing concerning him, condemn us, if, after all our reading and hearing of him in the scripture, we do not come to him in faith!

Think also what need you have to fall down at his feet; all depends upon this discovery. And after that which you have read in this chapter of the heart of man, do not suppose that you have no devil to cast out. He has surest hold of us when he lies quietly within us.

27. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

By children, Christ means the Jews. The remark which the Saviour made was a hard saying from the mouth of one possessed of so much goodness. But what did she do? She did not turn away from him in scorn and anger, as we do, when the truth is told us.

28. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

She owned that she had no right to the children's bread; as all who are truly humbled think themselves unworthy of the least of God's mercies. But mark how she caught at the words of Christ, and turned them to her own advantage. When she was compared to a dog, she argued that as a dog she might eat of the crumbs which fell from her master's table, without loss to the master, or offence to the children. So a distressed sinner keeps his hold on Christ, and will not be beat off.

29. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

Christ always gives the same answer to the same faith. But when did he hear any such saying from you? When did this one cry for help, "Lord have mercy upon me," ever come from you? But till you do so cry, in true repentance, from a feeling of your disorder, see, in verses the 21st and 22nd, what you are, and will continue to be.

30. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

31. And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

32. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

Did they beseech Christ to put his hand upon the man for bodily healing; and shall not we beseech him earnestly for the life of our souls to put his hands upon us? In other words, shall we not entreat him to bless us, and to put his Spirit within us?

The passage gives great encouragement to those Christians who intercede with God for others. Hence we learn that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.—*Edit.*

33. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue ;

The observations of the Evangelist, that Christ took the man aside, and touched his tongue, are not insignificant. And the expressions might have a happy effect upon us, if, upon hearing them, we would turn short upon ourselves, and begin from this day to say, when did he take me aside? when did I ever go aside with him in my heart, to have it searched, converted, and healed by him? If this is not done, all other things, all reading, hearing, praying, and doing, without this, is miserable self-deceit, and dead formality. If ever Christ does good to the soul, he must have it to himself, with a confession of its want of him, and earnest desire of his help. Not all persons, who pretend to be religious, choose to be in private with him, naked and open to his piercing eye, and in full sincerity of heart desirous of being subjects of his refining work.

34. And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

Think why Christ looked up to heaven, and why he sighed. He looked up there, to guide your eye thither for help: he sighed for the diseases and miseries of mankind, and for sin, the accursed cause of them. He sighed when he did a cure, for the unhappy necessity of it: he sighed, that so many would go without healing, because of their hardness and impenitence. Can you learn nothing from this? Can you see no danger in sin? Can you behold the sad effects of sin, in the tender concern and strong emotion of Jesus, and not feel concern for your own? O send a deep sigh after him! It will find a way to his compassionate heart. He wants to hear it from you, and to hear you asking for his Spirit to groan with you.

O Lord, thou art present in all thy power to speak the words "Be opened!" Say unto the blind eyes, to the deaf ears, and to the heart which is shut against thee, "Be opened;" that we may hear the sweet sound of gospel mercy, yea that we may hear and do all that thou com-

mandest. And when the ear is thus opened, every tongue will be loosed to speak thy praise.

35. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

Not only showing the completeness of the cure by his articulating perfectly: but he manifested the spirit of gratitude with which he was inspired.—(*Edit.*) It is wonderful to observe, how plainly, clearly, and affectingly many persons, who have a work of grace upon their hearts can speak of the things of God; though they are otherwise low in learning, or knowledge, and not at all superior to others in natural parts and capacity. On the other hand, if those who have the advantages of education, and the tongue of the learned, do not speak more plainly of Christ, it is because they do not know him.

36. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it:

The reasons of his charging them have been mentioned. It was, however, hard for them not to speak after what they had seen. We are sure Christ does not lay any such injunction upon *us*, nor expect that we should hold our tongues, when we know him.

37. And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

Christ hath indeed done all things well, to the great astonishment of men and angels. Though he was God, he became man, and took our nature upon him, that he might redeem it from the curse it was under. In the days of his flesh he went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. He hath given us holy instructions and left his perfect example to be a guide to us, in our walking with God. He bore the heavy load of our sins upon the cross, and died an accursed death, to ransom us from the pit of hell. He is interceding for us in heaven,

and he is always ready to begin, carry on, and complete the work of our salvation, by the grace and power of his Spirit. But what can it profit you, to hear and know all this, if the Saviour does nothing for you? And what is the reason that he does not, but because you do not come to him, you are not in earnest with him; you do not desire him; you do not desire him to do great things for you? It is truly our own fault, if we do not all say this of Jesus Christ, from our own experience.

SECTION XXVI.

Chap. viii. ver. 1—9.

CHRIST MIRACULOUSLY FEEDS FOUR THOUSAND PERSONS.

1. In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

We may here observe that we have no spiritual food except what Christ gives us in his word, and by his Spirit. And there is no nourishment in anything but what he gives, and blesses to us; and we must receive and feed upon it for the nourishment of our souls. If our wills are not for it, it is as vain to expect to feed our souls with it, as to set bread upon a stone to feed it. We have God's Word, yea, Christ offered to us to feed upon. Where is our hunger for this food?

2. I have compassion on the multitude,

His compassionate heart is still the same, and it is towards you; see it opened for your benefit in these words, Have pity on yourselves.

2. Because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:

Three days are to be understood according to the Jewish mode of computation. Nothing to eat, may have reference to the circumstance that they had not any fixed meals, but were sustained by that which they casually took.—*Edit.*

In regard to spiritual food, no man ever was with Jesus three days, or three hours, in truth and sincerity, without a blessing. But alas! with regard to many of us, how many days and years have we been without eating? This has happened, not because we had no spiritual food to eat, but because we would not receive what was given us.

3. And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

Christ pitied them, for he saw they would faint. When we fast from Christ's meat, we starve our souls, and leave them to perish.

4. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?

How lately had they seen his power in the very same case? and still they return to their doubting and questioning. You may wonder at this; but see if there is not the same root of unbelief in yourselves. A poor soul, struck with its own sinfulness, is too apt to say, Can Christ do this? Has he comfort for me? A hardened soul feels no want, and slights Christ's power.

5. And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

Christ does not say a word to upbraid them with their slowness and unbelief. How long does he bear with us! But remember that his patience will have an end.

6. And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.

Christ could have fed them without these loaves, but would not. So he is pleased to bless the reading of the

Scriptures, hearing sermons, prayer, and other means of grace to our souls; but he has no blessing for our souls without the use of these means. Let us also learn from the example of Christ to beg a blessing from God upon our food, and not to expect it otherwise.

Christ employed the ministry of his disciples, and he still uses others in the distribution of his blessings, though all comes originally from *him*; and the little we have, he first gives, and then increases.

7. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.

8. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.

9. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

The loaves and the fishes were a provision for Christ, and his attendants. He gives all away; and in so doing most effectually taught the disciples, what a supply they had at all times in him. We need not keep what the wants of others call for; we may trust Jesus for the supplies we need.

Ver. 1—9.—Christ never forsakes those that follow him, and will not leave them to perish with hunger. But one chief end of this, and all his other miracles, of feeding and curing the bodies of men, was that we might believe in him as the Saviour of the world, and come to him for the life of our souls. Do you follow him, hunger and thirst after him, and then he will supply you out of his fulness, and be your support in all straits and difficulties. His power is still the same; his love for the souls of men is greater than ever it was for their bodies; his aim in all he did was chiefly at *them*; and if we do not neglect them ourselves, by keeping them from him, he who fed the multitude, has food in abundance for our souls, and will nourish us unto everlasting life. This is the spiritual opening of Scripture, and the right understanding of it, and the way to get life from it. Christ is always at hand to help.

Think whether you have a heart to ask of him, what he waits to give you : peace with God, and inward strength to do his will.

SECTION XXVII.

Chap. viii. ver. 10—21.

CHRIST REPROVES THE PHARISEES, AND WARNS HIS DISCIPLES.

10. And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

Christ carried a blessing with him wherever he went ; and he imparted it to all who were disposed to receive it. It may be profitable to you to pause upon the words “ he came.” He is now here, and always coming in his word, his grace, and his Spirit. Are you ready for him ? Do your hearts say, *come?* There is great danger in putting him off time after time.

11. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him,

We have all too much of this pharisaical spirit of questioning with Jesus, when all our own safety lies in a full submission to his authority, and we have no wisdom but what we learn of him. There is no disputing what Nicodemus said : his miracles prove him to be, “ a teacher come from God,” and whoever believes this has his way plain before him.

11. Seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

Perhaps such a sign as Moses, Joshua, and Elijah wrought ; that is, something more than enough. We have

sufficient proof of Christ's power and will to heal us; but if we have no desire and will to be saved by him, more would do us no good, and only increase our condemnation.

12. And he sighed deeply in his spirit,

He was greatly concerned at their hardness and unbelief. Let this sigh pierce deeply into our souls! Will not the knowledge that Christ sighs for them, draw one sigh, or groan from us?

12. And saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

They required a miracle so striking and convincing that they should not be able to withstand the force of it. The same prejudice, pride of self, and stubbornness in unbelief, which resisted the evidence they already had, would have held out against all other.

13. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

Fear, lest he should leave you! And take notice that if you would keep him with you, you must be humble and teachable.

Those who do not desire to be convinced, cavil, and pretend to want more light, but no additional light, however abundant, would open their eyes. Christ, who knew their hearts, and what it was fit for him to do, leaves all such to themselves.

14. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

15. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

The leaven of the Pharisees was hypocrisy: the leaven of Herod was the error of the Sadducees, courtiers who believed no resurrection, angels, nor spirit, and who pre-

tended to take Herod, an earthly king, for the Christ. Either of these opinions would have been sour leaven, yea poison to their hearts.

16. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.

17. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?

It is a hardened heart that causes darkness in the understanding, makes men deaf and blind; and forgetful of everything that is good. Suppose the sun to shine upon two men, one blind, the other not; one would see every thing clearly by it, the other nothing, though it is the same sun, and gives forth the same light to both. So it is with men in reading the Scripture; it is clear, or dark to them, just as they are fitted, or not fitted to receive it.

18. Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

19. When I brake the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.

20. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.

21. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

You who read, and hear so much of Christ, if you do do not know enough of him for your salvation, the fault is certainly in yourselves. You have heard the reason—a hard heart is barred against him.

See, O my soul, whether all that is here said to the whole of the disciples, in the way of sharp rebuke, does not come home to thyself; and whether thou art not still backward to understand and believe the grace and power of Jesus, notwithstanding the proof thou hast of his all-sufficiency, in this, and many other miracles, wrought on purpose, and recorded for thy conviction and assurance. Art thou without righteousness and without strength, and

ready to despond at the sight of thy corruption, manifold wants, and utter helplessness? Dear soul, why wilt thou shut thine eyes, stop thine ears, and harden thy heart against what thou here readest and hearest? Why dost thou ever forget it? How is it that thou dost not yet understand who Jesus is, and what he is able to do for thee?

The earthly sense still prevailed in the disciples, and they turned all Christ's sayings that way. So hard is it for those whose hearts are in the world, to have an understanding and relish of spiritual things.

SECTION XXVIII.

Chap. viii. ver. 22—38.

THE MIRACLE OF RESTORING SIGHT TO ONE BLIND, THE
CONFESSION OF PETER.

22. And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

Spiritual blindness is worse than natural; all are blind till Christ opens their eyes; and none but he can do it. Have you come to him for a cure? If you have not, you are blind to this day!

23. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town;

O condescending, compassionate Jesus! So thou wouldest take every one of us by the hand, and guide us thyself, to thy Father, thy truth, thy heaven.

23. And when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

24. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

At first he saw confusedly, and imperfectly, as we do. Though we are in the hands of Christ for a cure, we must have patience ; we do not see all at once.

25. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up : and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

So Christ will bring his work to perfection in us, by degrees, and in his own time. And we see clearly, when we know him to be the way, the truth, and the life, and resolve to follow him.

26. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

Perhaps, because he knew that they would not regard it, and so be the worse for it. Bethsaida was a hardened place, notwithstanding Christ so often preached in it.

27. And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Cesarea Philippi ; and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am ?

What answer can *you* give to this, of your own proper knowledge ?

28. And they answered, John the Baptist ; but some say, Elias ; and others, One of the prophets.

29. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am ? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

This answer of Peter, may serve to lead to this question, who and what is Christ ? The Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. What has he done, and what do you desire he should do for you ? He does not want a vain confession from us, that we acknowledge him to be the anointed of God, to be our King, Priest, and Prophet : he desires to do his whole office in us, by opening our eyes, washing us from our sins in his own blood, and ruling over us by his Spirit. This confession of Christ, from a true

knowledge of what he is, of our want of him, and faithfulness to him, makes a Christian.

30. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

As yet they were not fit to preach Christ, as Peter soon made it appear. The disciples then knew him but by halves ; and the meanest Christian, now, knows him better than they did at this time.

31. And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Of this the disciples then knew nothing ; and here Peter was as blind as the rest of the disciples.

32. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan : for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

This was sharp indeed ! But Christ cannot endure worldly hearts : he knows that they are not fit for him, and intended that this rebuke should pierce into all our hearts like lightning.

34. And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them,

He would have all hear that in which all, to the end of the world, are so much concerned.

34. Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Christ will have him deny his natural self, which savours only of the things of the world. He will also take up his cross, by dying to his worldly self. He will in great humility take up his cross, as his own desert, while he sees Christ's death upon it, as his only deliverance from the

curse and punishment of sin. What can be a greater cross to the pride of nature? And yet, painful as this knowledge is, every man must come to *it*, let his state or attainments be what they will. The cross of bodily austerities, patient sufferings, and self-denying labours of any kind, however necessary, is a vain subterfuge, when taken up as our righteousness, to the exclusion of a better, and the only one which will be so accounted of God. Besides, we must follow Christ, in doing and suffering the will of God.

35. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

The man who will save his life, is he who only thinks of, and cares for, and desires most to enjoy, his worldly life. He "shall lose it," indeed, as to all the purposes of his being sent into the world, if he loses heaven for it. But whosoever will deny himself for Christ's sake, and the gospel's, even to the loss of life,—shall save it eternally.

36. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

No man in his senses can have anything to reply to what is so palpably evident; and if this consideration was allowed its due weight, the world would be all self-denial and obedience. But behold the weakness, folly, and strong corruption of human nature! A petty advantage, one single lust in the opposite scale, can outweigh the soul, and all its interests.

Perhaps you would be a better man,—you would deny yourself in what the world thinks you need not,—you would own Christ more, in many things;—you would read the Scriptures, pray in, and with your families, and show yourselves more on the side of religion than you do, if you were not hindered by a false shame. Hear then what Christ says, knowing how many would be thus hindered.

“What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” If we have this constantly before our eyes, and live in the belief of it, we shall be Christians.

38. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation ; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Think on these words, and then you will be content to let men speak all manner of evil of you, as they certainly will, whenever you are in earnest in saving your soul according to the religion of Christ.

SECTION XXIX.

Chap. ix. ver. 1—10.

JESUS IS TRANSFIGURED.

1. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

The persons alluded to were Peter, James, and John. The kingdom of God, which Christ came to set up on the earth as a specimen and proof of his greatness in the kingdom of glory, in which he will appear at the last day, and also of God's power to make us like him at his coming.

2. And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them into a high mountain apart by themselves : and he was transfigured before them.

3. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow ; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

4. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses : and they were talking with Jesus.

5. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here : and let us make three tabernacles ; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

6. For he wist not what to say ; for they were sore afraid.

Then it is plain he should not have said what he did. It would not have been good for Christ or them to have stopped there. He had still his own work to finish, and he had appointed to Peter a great work in the world, and a much higher glory was reserved for him. We profit by this mistake, when we conclude, that it is good to be nowhere but with Christ in heaven, and in the way to it, by doing his work.

7. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them : and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son : hear him.

This voice sounds as powerfully into the hearts of the faithful, as if they heard it spoken to them from the clouds. And all depends upon it. If you do not receive Christ, and hear him as the Son of God, you can have no share in him.

8. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

9. And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

When they would be better fitted to speak of them, in full belief of his resurrection, and of the great change which will then pass upon our bodies. As yet they were very lamentably in the dark, as appears by what follows.

10. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

Christ's rising from the dead ; for it is not probable that they disbelieved a resurrection in general ; only they had no notion of the sufferings and death of Christ, and therefore not of his rising again. What blindness and ignorance was here ! And observe, how men are proof against

plain words, when they are prepossessed with a contrary opinion. Christ told them positively that he must die, and rise again, and yet they did not understand it. How often is this our case ! and how greatly does it concern us to know, that the reason why we do not understand Christ better, is because we set up a wisdom, and will of our own against him ; and have not learned this first lesson in his school, to submit to his teaching with undisputing simplicity.

Ver. 1—10.—At the close of the last chapter, Christ had stunned his disciples with a solemn warning of his approaching death, and sufferings. Here they are revived by God's attestation to him from heaven, as his well-beloved Son, and with a sight of his glorified body ; and are thereby showed what kind of bodies they would have at the resurrection. For all the faithful shall be raised in glory, with such bodies, as His then was, and he now appears in at the right hand of God, and in which the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Matt. xiii. 43. And no doubt the remembrance of what they had seen would encourage them greatly in their work, and amidst all their sufferings. St. Paul tells us, that he was encouraged, supported, and comforted with the thoughts of his new body, his house eternal in the heavens, of God's making and providing for him. 2. Cor. v. 5. What do we set our affections most upon ? These grassy, earthly bodies of ours, which were made to perish, and to be food for worms. If we might keep them always, we should not desire to exchange them for glorious heavenly bodies. It may be asked, why did Christ only admit three of his disciples to the sight of his transfiguration ? We know not any farther than that they would communicate it to the rest for their benefit, as it is here left upon record for ours. Let us be Christians indeed, by thinking most of that happy change, and happy home, when God shall wipe all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no

more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. Rev. xxi. 4.

SECTION XXIX.

Chap. ix. ver. 11—29.

JESUS CASTETH OUT A DUMB SPIRIT.

11. And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come ?

If the scribes say so, why may not we satisfy them and others that Elias is come, and that we have seen him ? In answer to which Christ shows their mistake, and tells them that he whom they had seen with him, was not the Elias prophesied of as his forerunner, but another, namely, John the Baptist.

12. And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things ;

Elias is John the Baptist, Christ's forerunner, and the opener of his dispensation, in which all things were to be restored. In this dispensation, God's peace and good will are restored to men ; and the hearts of men to God. You never have your work before you till you are aiming at this restoration, each one for himself.

12. And how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.

This was immediately subjoined to prevent a mistake in the disciples, namely, that the restoration here spoken of was to be that of the kingdom to Israel. Acts i. 6. No, verily, says Christ, the Son of man, the author of it, must accomplish it by suffering.

13. But I say unto you, that Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

14. And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

15. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

They were struck with an awful sense of Christ's coming and presence; and ran with alacrity to see and hear him. Here is a pattern for us; let us receive him gladly into our hearts.

16. And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

He knew, though at a distance, that they were questioning with them; and what was the subject. Nothing is hid from him. It would be of great use to us, to set Christ always before us.

17. And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

18. And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away; and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

This was a pitiable case, and is so represented here, that we might never think our own to be desperate, while we have the same helps in which we may trust. Though all other means fail us, Jesus cannot.

19. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

Can you see nothing in yourselves to make you think this is spoken to *you*? You are undone if Christ esteems you a faithless generation. You must be spoken to more plainly. If your nature, your sin, your helpless condition, has not been brought before Christ, with a true sense of it, and concern for yourself, like that of the father of this child, you are not yet come to him. You therefore who read this, bring yourselves to him, with all your sins, and

with all your needs, for his help. You can do nothing for yourselves in the exigency of your souls: and take heed also that you do not go for help chiefly to man, to sermons, to books, or even to the Scripture itself. All they can do is to send you to Jesus.

20. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him: and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

Length of time is no hindrance to Christ's power. Suppose him saying to many of us, How long hast thou been an unawakened worldling, or sinner? The true answer would be, "Of a child." But do not therefore despair: only feel thy case now at the last, and come to him for a cure.

22. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.

No one ever said these words to Christ with a sincere heart, in vain.

23. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe,

The answer to this, according to some, is, No, we cannot; it must be given us. So I am persuaded. But how given? Not instantaneously, or by putting a force upon our wills, any more than in the case of strength against sin, which we equally want; but by the secret operation of the Spirit, convincing us of our want of Christ, and of his all-sufficiency; and inclining us in the use of our faculties, to believe, and embrace the mercy offered us in him.

23. All things are possible to him that believeth.

Victory over sin, gospel holiness, perseverance; and that because the power of God waits upon faith, which is a compound of penitence, desire, and trust: and is as freely given to the humble believer, as the breast is by the mother to the child that turns to it.

24. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

We think it an easy matter to believe, and say we do; but sense of sin, and an humble heart, must go before, and then we shall cry out, Lord, help mine unbelief.

25. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

Christ proceeded without delay to the cure. Why? Could too many be witnesses of the miracle, or be benefitted by it? It must be remembered that the multitude was ready to make an ill use of it, and he was aware of the consequence of exciting a sedition, on his account. So in ver. 30, "He passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it;" and took occasion from thence to arm his disciples against the common notion of his temporal kingship, by forewarning them again of his approaching sufferings and death. Learn also from this verse, that, when you know every one the plague of his own heart, and who is your physician, to rebuke it in you, and give the word of command for your recovery, you know all. Be faithful to this knowledge, and you do all.

26. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

27. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.

Know for certain that a great work has been wrought in you, when you give your hand to Jesus for this purpose; and that he will answer your faith, and fulfil the desire of your heart, by purifying you from the guilt of sin, and raising you from its death.

28. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

29. And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

Here is our remedy, and what sin will not these united keep under?

SECTION XXX.

Chap. ix. ver. 30—50.

JESUS INSTRUCTS HIS DISCIPLES.

30. And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.

31. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

32. But they understood not that saying,

Observe, it was plain in itself, and we who live after the event, and know and believe the resurrection of Christ, cannot help wondering at the slowness of comprehension which the disciples here exhibited. Nevertheless such a resurrection was a strange thing in the earth, and the death of Christ contrary to the opinions entertained of the Messiah; and both these concurred to keep them in ignorance. Let us bring the matter home to ourselves. Plain words from the mouth of Christ are not plain to us; we have other things in view, are set down in other opinions, and do not wish them to be true.

32. And [they] were afraid to ask him.

They need not have been afraid, after the experience they had of his readiness to instruct them, and his great patience with them; but most probably they did not choose to know more of what they were not willing to believe. Is not this our case? We plead ignorance, and remain ignorant of what we might know because we are suspicious beforehand, that it will put us upon doing something to which we have no mind.

33. And he came to Capernaum; and being in the house he asked them, What was it ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

He knew their hearts, and what lay lurking within them; as he does ours. O what a searching eye have we every moment upon us, and upon every thought that arises within us!

34. But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.

35. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first,

That is truly so, and chiefest in God's esteem.

35. The same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

Let him be last of all, and servant even of the meanest, especially to help them in their way to heaven.

36. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

37. Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

Observe, 1st, Christ embraced the child (according to the Greek) to show how dear all such are to him. Observe, 2dly, he adds, whosoever shall receive one such little one in my name, in humility, poor in spirit, and as free from all ambitious, aspiring thoughts as a little child, "receiveth me,"—shall be so accounted of by me, as if he received me; and farther, he is rightly prepared to receive Christ into his heart, with all his graces.

38. And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us.

39. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

40. For he that is not against us is on our part.

Here Christ teaches us to think and judge favourably of

all who are working against sin and Satan, though they do not altogether agree with us in opinion.

41. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

Thereby he shows his inward regard to Christ, and his love towards you, his disciples.

42. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me,

Hinder them in their christian progress, by saying or doing anything to turn them from Christ,

42. It is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

It were better for him to suffer the most shameful, violent death, than by hindering the salvation of the least penitent sinner, to gain all worldly advantages.—*Edit.*

43. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

44. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

45. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

46. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

47. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire:

48. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Every thing must be parted with, though never so dear to us, that would hinder us from embracing and cleaving to Christ. We have no choice but either that, or eternal torments. God grant that we may never know what this fire and this worm are. Take especial notice, that to confirm our belief in this point, and to strike the greater awe into our souls, the warning is thrice repeated.

49. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

Every one who is an acceptable sacrifice unto God, must, and shall be salted with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, cleansing him from his corruption, and preserving him from future contamination, as salt does that upon which it is sprinkled.

50. Salt is good ; but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it ?

This is a caution to the disciples and to others, to seek after, and retain the Holy Spirit, who is signified by the salt.

50. Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

Have this salt in yourselves, and then you will be at peace with all the world. You will be loving and gentle to all, and there will be an end of all peevishness, sourness, and quarrelling, both within doors, and without. And if we are not thus disposed, both in our families and everywhere else, it is a proof that we have not this blessed salt in us.

SECTION XXXI.

Chap. x. ver. 1—16.

CHRIST TREATS OF MARRIAGE,—BLESSSES CHILDREN.

1. And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judæa, by the farther side of Jordan : and the people resort unto him again ; and as he was wont, he taught them again.

He knew his business in the world, and was always ready to carry it forward. O that we were but as ready to hear

him! And yet if we do not hear him gladly, we are undone for ever. Let us not believe this in vain:—let us go to him as the people did:—let us hear him in his word,—hear him speaking to us in our hearts.

2. And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.

The Pharisees held it was by warrant from Moses; and supposing Christ did not, thought to find matter against him. But he would not lose this opportunity of instructing them better in an important point. This is an example for all, and especially for ministers, not to dissemble or deny the truth for any fear of danger.

3. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4. And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

5. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

That is to say, he gave you this permission. As much as if he had said, if you will do it, do it. But nevertheless God did not overlook the hardness of their hearts. Their condition in his sight was unaltered, notwithstanding this indulgence.

6. But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female.

7. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife:

8. And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

One in heart and affection; one soul in two bodies; united in their prayers, and helping one another in all their designs both for this world, and the next. What a happy state is this! And how lamentable it is, when an husband and wife are united for life only to vex and thwart each other! Alas! how many such unchristian marriages are there in all places!

9. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder.

10. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.

11. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

Hence we learn that according to the decree of Christ, polygamy is unlawful to the end of the world.

12. And if a woman put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Though the case might be less frequent, yet Jesus provided against this violation of the marriage vow, on the part of the woman also, with her husband.—*Edit.*

13. And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them : and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

14. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not : for of such is the kingdom of God.

He suffered you to come to him, and received you into his covenant, in your baptism. But if you have not since come to him, and entered yourselves into his covenant, with the disposition here required, your baptism is of no effect.

15. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

All who would receive the kingdom of God, must feel themselves as helpless, and be as teachable and as free from guile and malice as children. Infants have but one appetite, namely, for their food ; and will be quieted with nothing else ; do what you will to them, still the want is felt, and they weep again for their natural food. So we should be with respect to God and his kingdom, and say, let me be a member of it, let me belong to Christ, or I die.

16. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

How anxious should parents be that Christ, even now,

would bless their children with pardon, and bestow on them his Holy Spirit.—*Edit.*

SECTION XXXII.

Chap. x. ver. 17—27.

CHRIST TREATS OF RICHES.

17. And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him,

He showed an earnest desire to be put in the right way to attain eternal life; but he was lamentably ignorant of what lay lurking in his heart.

17. And [he] asked him, Good Master what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

He thought of nothing, but of making a ladder of his own works in order to climb up into heaven. But Christ soon showed him that he would not be able by such means to come there.

Remember what he says, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” John vi. 29. Get that work done, and all the rest will follow, and be approved of God. Build upon any other foundation, and all you do is of no avail to your salvation.

18. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good?

How can we think ourselves good, and bear to be called so, when Christ would not? He was all goodness, both as God and man; but as man he would not be called good, showing us all plainly what we are to think of ourselves.

18. There is none good but one, that is, God.

And yet how hard do we find it, at times, to confess the

goodness of God ; his long-suffering is, of itself, a demonstration of his goodness.—*Edit.*

19. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

These are precepts, chiefly relating to our duty towards our neighbour, but they are to be obeyed with a peculiar regard to the authority, and will of God.—*Edit.*

20. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

Can any of us say so? Have we ever sat down one hour during the whole of our lives, to consider the meaning of so much as one of these commandments? knowing in our own hearts that we must be judged according to them?

21. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest : go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

Jesus looked graciously upon him, in order to win his heart, and to induce him to attend to the advice which he in this verse gives him. "Sell whatsoever thou hast." This was a particular command to the young man from Christ's own mouth ; and he was obliged to obey it, as we should be, if the same command was given particularly to any one of us. But it is not binding to all men, at all times, and without exception, any more than the command to Abraham to leave his country, or to sacrifice his son. A master may give a command to one servant, which he does not to the rest ; and in that case the servant must comply, or throw up his obedience. That which the command says to all, is, be ready : let nothing hinder you from obeying and following Christ : look well to the ground of your hearts. You would part with all to save the life of a husband, a wife, or a child ; and if you are not willing to do as much for your souls ; if you are not so affected towards Christ, you do not love him.

22. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved : for he had great possessions.

Here the depravity of his heart came into open view. The world had possession of him. If he must part with Christ, he was sorry for it, but with the condition of keeping him he could not comply. How many of the sayings of Christ make *us* sad, though they are far less hard than this ! In some cases how little do they trouble us, and how carelessly do we cast them behind our backs !

23. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God !

It is the same thing when we eagerly covet, and long for them in our hearts ; in that case the desire is equally turned from God.

24. And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God !

Those that trust in riches are puffed up with them, make them their god, and can hardly get into that strait gate with such a load upon their shoulders. You may think it hard to be poor ; if so, it is a plain proof that you think little of heaven, else you would thank God for making your way to it so much easier than it is to the wealthy. The general cry is, not in words, but in the heart, let me be rich, take heaven who will. What is the poor man better than the rich, or of what kind is his heart, when he lies and cheats for the gain of a trifle ?

25. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved ?

Perhaps they meant that if all were not rich, they would be. It is very certain that the same desires make the same men in the sight of God.

27. And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God : for with God all things are possible.

God can turn the hearts of the rich, and preserve them from trusting in their riches ; though it is a hard thing to perform, and they have a heavy clog upon them : for with him all things are possible.

SECTION XXXIII.

Chap. x. ver. 28—45.

CHRIST SPEAKS TO HIS DISCIPLES OF FUTURE REWARDS,—
OF HIS DEATH,—AND OF THEIR SUFFERINGS FOR HIM.

28. Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

Peter, like us, estimated too highly what they had forsaken. He did not sufficiently consider that they had escaped the cares and disappointments of worldly goods, together with their possession.—*Edit.*

29. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's,

30. But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions ; and in the world to come eternal life.

He shall have an hundred fold, in the true enjoyment of what he hath,—in spiritual comfort, in a heart of love to all,—even though poor and persecuted ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. 2 Cor. vi. 10.

31. But many that are first shall be last ; and the last first.

Those who are first in their own esteem, and the world's, as being rich and great, shall be last in God's. The poor

generally think they are lowly, because they are poor : but in this they deceive themselves, they have oftentimes as much conceit of themselves as any. All are proud by nature, till their hearts are made contrite, and they are humbled for sin.

32. And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem ; and Jesus went before them ; and they were amazed ; and as they followed, they were afraid.

They thought he was about to ruin himself, and to put them into danger, by going to Jerusalem. They feared that at which they should have rejoiced. As yet they were weak in faith and understanding, they knew not the necessity and the benefit of Christ's death. The Holy Spirit, at the day of Pentecost, turned them into other men ; as he does all true believers. But Christ was not wanting to them, in imparting further instruction ; neither will he be to us, if we obey him.

32. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

33. Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem ; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes ; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles :

34. And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him ; and the third day he shall rise again.

We learn from hence the great backwardness which there is in us all, to admit truths into our minds which are opposed to our natural inclinations, and worldly interests. We see with the eyes of flesh, and till we are beaten off from the pursuit of the world and sensual enjoyments, we can derive no benefit from the instructions of Christ.—*Edit.*

35. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

36. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you ?

‡ 37. They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

His glorious kingdom upon earth, on this their minds were set, and they thought he was now about to set it up; had it been otherwise, Christ would have told them that they knew not what they wished.

38. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

So he says to us. You would be high in my favour, but can you believe? Can you obey? Can you suffer, if you are called to endure loss, reproach, or persecution for my name sake?

39. And they said unto him, We can.

It is better to say, we will; O Lord make us able to suffer shame for thee.

39. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized.

He tells them that they should suffer for his sake, which accordingly came to pass. James was killed with the sword, Acts xii. 2. It is reported of John that he was thrown into a caldron of boiling oil. This was a baptism indeed! But by the power of God he came out unhurt. The same kind of trials await the ministers of the most high God at all times.

40. But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.

The chief ministers in setting up the kingdom of Christ were prepared, and God would in due time fit them for their office according to his will.

41. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

42. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exer-

cise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43. But so it shall not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

In other words, he shall be a servant to you; for true greatness consists in serving the brethren for their good to edification.

44. And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

That is, he must be in will and disposition. Lord grant us this humiliation, this truly christian frame of mind, which makes us great in thy estimation: give us this rather than any worldly greatness.

45. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Who of us can stoop so low from so great a height, and where can we find a better example of humility?

SECTION XXXIV.

Chap. x. ver. 46—52.

BARTIMEUS RESTORED TO SIGHT.

46. And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timæus, sat by the highway side, begging.

We also are poor and blind, if being sinners can make us so. Let us put ourselves in the way of Jesus who passes by in the preaching of his gospel.

47. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

A deep sense of our condition in sin, and of the danger of a natural state, will raise this cry in us, when we know that Jesus must help us, and that none else can.

48. And many charged him that he should hold his peace :

So the world will forbid us to cry to God, when we are in earnest to come to Jesus Christ for salvation.

48. But he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.

We also shall cry most mightily to Christ as opposition increases, if we know what we really want.

49. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called.

This was a precious moment to the blind man. He likewise will hear our cry, when we call upon him faithfully. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

49. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise ; he calleth thee.

50. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

He cast away his garment for haste and gladness. Make no delay when you know your spiritual blindness ; and think not of going anywhere but to Christ for a cure.

51. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee ? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

He knew that he was blind, and therefore he begged for a cure : but it is impossible for us to tell him what we want from him, if we have no knowledge and belief that we are undone sinners, and must perish without his help.

52. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.

What else can make us so ? If we had works to show for ourselves, we should not want Jesus to make us whole.

52. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

All must follow Jesus, who are made whole by him, and all true believers will, in the way of his perfect example, and in obedience to his holy commands.

SECTION XXXV.

Chap. xi. ver. 1—11.

CHRIST RIDETH WITH TRIUMPH INTO JERUSALEM.

1. And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,

2. And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you : and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat ; loose him, and bring him.

Here is a proof of Christ's divine knowledge. Who but he who knows everything, could have told them all this so exactly ? He knows what we have been doing this day, and every day of our lives, and he sees all the motions of our hearts.

3. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this ? say ye that the Lord hath need of him : and straightway he will send him hither.

4. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without, in a place where two ways met : and they loose him.

5. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt ?

6. And they said unto them, even as Jesus had commanded : and they let him go.

O that the name of Jesus was as powerful with us ; and that we were as ready to do everything at his bidding !

7. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him ; and he sat upon him.

Jesus sat upon the colt. The Lord of life and glory sits upon a poor despicable ass; meek and lowly, and yet having the power of salvation for all flesh! What can bring down our proud hearts if this does not? He who had all nature at his command, would not show himself in the stately manner of an earthly prince. His kingdom was not of this world; his aim in all he did was to make us spiritual, and show us the way to heaven; and he here teaches us most divinely, that the only way to it is through humility.

8. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.

As the Jews, and other nations used to do on occasions of great rejoicing. But where was Christ going, through all this solemnity? To be crucified. It was his joy and triumph to think he was going to deliver us from hell, and put it in our power to rejoice with him for ever. Let not his love be lost upon you; let it take hold of your hearts, that you may prepare yourselves to enter with him into his joy.

9. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

This! O this! should be the cry of our hearts; this is spiritual life: now we are blessed men and women indeed! when we say, and say truly from a sense of our undone state,—a sense of our want of Christ, and the mercy of God to us in him, Hosanna, that is, save us, O Lord, we beseech thee; from guilt, sin, and death, to pardon, holiness, and the gift of eternal life. Is not this the Saviour whom we all want?

10. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord:

The kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, of salvation by Jesus Christ, promised to David,—what he saw and longed for, and preached in so many of his psalms. The kingdom of David cometh in

the name of the Lord, in whose name only it does come ; none else having a power to forgive sins, or give us a right to heaven ; and make us fit for it. Christ's kingdom is a complete one, every way suited to our case, and worthy of all men to be received, as coming from *him*.

10. Hosanna in the highest.

Praise to God from the blessed angels for joy of our deliverance. O poor soul ! thou art dead indeed, if thou canst not join with them.

11. And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple : and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

Who knows what Jesus felt within himself, when he considered the holiness of the temple,—the spirituality and end of the service performed in it,—the blindness and hypocrisy of the Jews, and the destruction which was about to fall upon it, and themselves ! Who knows how near we Britons are to destruction for what things he sees in us ! He is always looking round about upon all things, and chiefly viewing them in their moral aspect. What does he now see in us, and in the temples of our bodies ?

Ver. 1—11. When we read these verses, we should think with ourselves, what can it signify to us that Christ came into the world, to be the Saviour of it,—that he wrought his miracles upon the bodies of men,—that he made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, as the king of the Jews, and together with them of all nations, if he does not enter into our hearts, if we do not gladly receive him as our Saviour, if we do not put ourselves into his hands to be cured of the deadly plague of sin which cleaves to our nature, if we do not take him for our Lord and king to reign over us ? This is the right knowledge of scripture, this is putting aside the veil, and discovering the spiritual meaning of the Bible ;—this is the way to have our hearts burn at the reading of it. If we read it barely as a history,

and go no farther than the letter of it, it can do us no good. It must come home to us, it must be applied to our own case, it must lay us open to ourselves, and put all in motion within us. The scripture, indeed, has not that life in itself that we want, but it sends us to Christ for it, and to him we must go; and till then, whatever we pretend, we have no faith in him. The same Spirit which gave it, must work with it, and lay every one of us dead at Christ's feet, that he may raise us up again to a new life of faith in him, and obedience to his commandments. And the Bible then does its office in us, when it brings us to him, with his prayer of the blind man, "Lord, that I might receive my sight."

SECTION XXXVI.

Chap. xi. ver. 12—20.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE CURSED;—THE TEMPLE CLEANSED.

12. And on the morrow when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry :

13. And seeing a fig-tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon : and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves ; for the time of figs was not yet.

14. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

We must not for one moment suppose that Christ blasted the fig-tree, or cursed it, from any passionate feeling, as men in anger imprecate curses on objects of inanimate nature : it was with love to us, and with divine sweetness in his heart. In all God's curses upon things inanimate, there is nothing but grace and goodness to man. They are intended to make us tremble at our unfruitful-

ness, and to know our doom if we die in it. As sure as the fig-tree withered away, so surely shall we die eternally, if we are not alive unto God, and in a fruit-bearing state, by being joined to Christ : God will not be put off with leaves only.

15. And they come to Jerusalem : and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves ;

16. And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

Christ, in this act of seeming severity, showed a becoming regard to the place of God's worship, and he teaches us to do the same. The Jews were guilty of a sad profanation of the temple ; let not us be guilty of a like disregard to the places in which we assemble to worship God, and partake of Christ's sacraments, by bringing our worldly thoughts into them.

17. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer ? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

When you go to church, thus think with yourselves, this is the house of prayer. I am now about to appear solemnly before God, to acknowledge my dependence upon him, and lay open all my wants before him, spiritual and temporal. See that you make it a house of prayer to yourselves, by coming to it whenever you are able. Make opportunities. Think it a duty so to do. Think what your state is, if your heart does not draw you to the house of God, and to his worship.

18. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him : for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

They could not bear to have that done by him, which they knew in their consciences they should have done for themselves ; and this cut them to the heart because they

saw that by so conducting themselves, they were lowered in the estimation of the people.

19. And when even was come, he went out of the city.

20. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

Dead for ever, as we shall one day appear to ourselves to be, when the breath goes out of our bodies, if we do not accept of life from Christ.

SECTION XXXVII.

Chap. xi. ver. 21—33.

PRAYER—JOHN THE BAPTIST.

21. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

22. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

Do you who profess yourselves to be Christians, believe steadfastly, that he will do everything for you, of which you stand in need, and trust in nothing else, but in the Lord.

23. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

He shall attain to that which is so utterly impossible to man. The sight of our impure hearts, and defiled nature, is enough to daunt us. But consider it is God's work; and he both can, and will cleanse them, and renew them for himself. This mountain stands between God and us, and must be removed.

24. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire

when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

How many never pray ! How many pray without asking ! that is, they scarcely know what they want, nor do they earnestly desire to receive. Prayer is, however, the proper work of a Christian ; let us do that in faith, and certainly God will do his part, in answering our requests. You may rest assured that he will give such an answer to your prayers as he knows to be best. Leave that to him, or else there is no faith, no prayer.

25. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any : that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

The flesh complains that to forgive is hard ; but God can work us to it ; and if we are not thus disposed, we have read our doom. O how little have we to forgive, and how much to be forgiven !

27. And they come again to Jerusalem : and as he was walking in the temple, there came to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,

28. And said unto him, By what authority doest thou these things ? and who gave thee this authority to do these things ?

29. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

30. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men ? answer me.

31. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say From heaven ; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him ?

32. But if we shall say, Of men : they feared the people : for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.

33. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Christ's design in this passage was to convince his adver-

saries, that he might, with as much probability, have his authority from heaven, as John the Baptist, which they could not, or durst not deny, and that they might see the finger of God in what both did. And farther, we may observe, he would not give a direct answer to their question, because he knew they were unworthy, and would make an ill use of it. No one can learn of him, but he who is possessed of humility, and a sincere desire to profit by Jesus Christ.

SECTION XXXVIII.

Chap. xii. ver. 1—9.

PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD.

1. And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard,

This vineyard served to point out the Jewish church then; and it serves to point out the Christian church now. We must chiefly keep our thoughts to the latter.

1. And set a hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower,

He did all that was necessary on his part. And has he not done so by us? Has he not planted the gospel among us, prepared everything to our hands, and put us into a condition to render him the fruits of it in due season.

1. And let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

We may possibly think that he is at a distance from us, and on this account neglect our charge; but we may rest assured that he has his eye always upon us, and upon his own time of reckoning with us.

2. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

Christ sends his ministers, year by year; he sends to us now, even at this season. If he was here present to require our fruit, what should we say to him? Where is it?

3. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.

It is trouble enough to the true servants of God to be sent away empty; they need not be beaten also. And yet this is generally their lot; ill usage of some kind or other they must look for. Such is the nature of men, that all who are not wrought upon, and converted by them, will hate them. Think how dreadful your case will be, if you do no more than send your minister empty away.

4. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.

5. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some and killing some.

Behold here God's patience with men, notwithstanding their great provocations; and let it lead you to serious considerations of your state. For he must have some fruit from us sooner or later. He will indeed wait long for it; but woe be to us, if he find us empty at last.

6. Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son

O what goodness! What love was here! How dear are the souls of men to God! This Son, you know, Jesus Christ, has been sent, and is continually preached to us. And if we do not reverence him, receive him gladly into our hearts, and bring forth fruit under him, mercy is at an end with us for ever. God can do no more for us.

7. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be our's.

The Jews said, and did this, indeed ; we do it in effect, when we reject Christ and his salvation : and all such persons, if they had been alive then, would have joined with them in what they did. If Christ is not precious to us, if he does not teach us to crucify our sins, the scripture itself informs us, that we are of that number, of whom St. Paul writes, Heb. vi. 6, “Who crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” We may talk of our good hearts, and good meanings : but we do not rightly consider what guilt he has to lay to our charge, if we will not suffer him to bring us to God.

Do not some say in their hearts, let us rid ourselves of Christ, and of his doctrine, and then we may do as we list. Does not this thought lie lurking at the heart of every one of us, so long as we stand off from Christ, and his salvation, through our unbelief ?

8. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

As we do when we cast him from our hearts.

9. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do ? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

God miserably destroyed the Jews, and gave their vineyard to the rest of the world. But is God the same now as he was then, or not ? As surely as he destroyed the Jews, so surely shall we perish, if we neglect the vineyard, and do not live worthily of the gospel. He has granted us repentance unto life, and given us a Saviour ; but if we do not bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and honour the Saviour in our conversion, we here read our doom. We know not how soon this nation may be ruined on account of sin ; but whether it is or not, every sinner will perish eternally on account of his own transgression.

This parable, though it immediately concerned the Jews, is applicable to men at all times ; and we may see in this glass, how God deals with us for our unfruitfulness, under

the means of reformation, and for our contempt and rejection of Christ. May God give us grace to search our hearts by it, and enable us to take what is here said to ourselves.

SECTION XXXIX.

Chap. xii. ver. 10—17.

CHRIST ANSWERS THE PHARISEES, AND THE HERODIANS.

10. And have ye not read this scripture ; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner :

Here learn, that we may read the scripture and yet not understand it. The understanding the scripture comes to us by a spiritual gift, and is imparted to every honest and good heart, which desires to profit by what it reads and hears. If you would understand the scripture, let it not be a dead letter to you ; it will be your own fault if it is. Pray over it, that God would help you so to profit by the Bible.

Learn, again, that, just as a builder throws aside a stone which he judges to be unfit for use, so we throw aside Christ, till a sense of sin makes us feel a want of him. It will, however, be a happy effect of our reading, if Christ is made a chief corner-stone to us, elect, precious to us, 1 Peter ii. 6, that we may say from our own conversion by him,

11. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes ?

12. And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people : for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them :

Behold, here, the root of men's aversion to Christ, con-

tempt of his word, and hatred towards all who truly preach it: they speak against them. It is a hopeful sign, when you can bear to have the truth told you, and are willing to be laid open to yourselves. And it is, also, matter of absolute necessity, for in the want of this disposition you cannot take one step towards your salvation.

12. And they left him, and went their way.

They feared the people, and durst not do what they would. So the providence of God at all times checks a great deal of evil that would otherwise appear. Bad as the world is to live in, it would be a thousand times worse, if men had nothing but the restraint of conscience and their own hearts, to keep them from acting all the wickedness which they conceive.

13. And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.

The Pharisees were against paying tribute to Cæsar: the Herodians, as being courtiers, were great sticklers for it. So betwixt them, they thought that they should entangle him, let him answer which way he would. But Christ was not to be caught in this snare. We may observe from hence, that a man who knows and loves the truth, has always an answer ready according to godliness.

14. And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth:

They said, "We know that thou art true," but did not think it in their hearts. We both say and think so, and yet generally we are but little better for Christ. In this testimony, we have an excellent character of Christ from his enemies, worthy of every Christian's imitation, and one which should especially be the pattern of all his ministers.

14. Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?

15. Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their

hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me ? bring me a penny, that I may see it.

Take notice that Christ cannot be imposed upon by fair words, or fine speeches.

16. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription ? And they said unto him, Cæsar's.

17. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,

This was for the conviction and instruction of the Pharisees.

17. And to God the things that are God's.

This was in like manner for the Herodians, who were loose in their notions of religion. Hear what Christ says, with respect to both, Meddle not with uncustomed goods. This is one of the worst kinds of stealing, and not the less sinful for being common. With respect to God, if you know wherein you do not give him his due, do so no more. Remember that Christ will suffer none of his words to fall to the ground.

17. And they marvelled at him.

Let Christ and his gospel, not only excite our wonder, but let them win our hearts.

SECTION XL.

Chap. xii. ver. 18—27.

THE SADDUCEES CONFUTED.

18. Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection ;

Let us not be as one of those Sadducees, by forgetting the resurrection of the dead, by neglecting the proper

use which we should make of it, or by regulating our life according to that belief.

18. And they asked him, saying,

19. Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

20. Now there were seven brethren : and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.

21. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed : and the third likewise.

22. And the seven had her, and left no seed : last of all the woman died also.

23. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them ? for the seven had her to wife.

24. And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God ?

Ignorance of the scriptures, when wilful, is not only a wicked contempt of one of God's best gifts, but the worst of all blindness. If we do not know them, whatever else we know, we shall not be profited by our knowledge. The power of God in Christ is fully manifested in the scriptures, to the end that it may be sought unto, and trusted in, for our salvation.

25. For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage ; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

26. And as touching the dead, that they rise ; have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ?

His being their God, implies his being so in a way of blessing, and favour. But they were dead when these words were spoken to Moses : therefore they must rise again. If it should be said that he might nevertheless be their God, whether they rose from the dead or not, as their souls were in bliss : the answer is, that the souls of Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob, without their bodies, could not with strict propriety be called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

27. He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living : ye therefore do greatly err.

He is the God of those who are to live in a perfect state, which can only be, when the soul and body are united. No evidence can be drawn from hence for the soul's sleeping till the resurrection, unless it can be proved that the soul is the man. Our Saviour's argument would be indeed equally valid, if the soul were quiescent till the resurrection.

We are, in this passage, clearly instructed, that there will be a resurrection of the body, and that our new body will be a glorious, and never-dying one, and that it will therefore be greatly changed from what it is now.

SECTION XLI.

Chap. xii. ver. 28—34.

CHRIST ANSWERS A QUESTION RESPECTING THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

28. And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all ?

29. And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel ; The Lord our God is one Lord :

30. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength : this is the first commandment.

It is the first in God's account, and in Christ's account, but is it so in ours ? Perhaps some of us never asked ourselves in our whole lives, what it is to love God, and

whether we love him or not. What answer shall we make, when the question is asked us at the day of judgment ?

31. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” to serve him cordially in all his interests of soul and body ; and not the less for his faults and infirmities, or even offences against ourselves ; any more than we cease to promote our own, for anything that we know of ourselves. But who does this ? Where is the man who loves God and his neighbour as he ought ? If none are to be found, where are our hopes arising from our duties ? And what enemies are those persons to our peace and hope ;—how ignorant of the demands of the law, its extreme rigour, and fearful malediction, who would rob us of Christ’s atoning blood and perfect righteousness, and send us to the works of our hands, in whole, or in part, before or after faith, for justification unto life ?

Mr. Adam’s prayer on these words :—O Lord, thou knowest that I think these two commandments *great*, that I desire to have them always in my eye, think myself unhappy in coming short of them, and ask it of thee now, as I do continually, to write them in my heart.

31. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth : for there is one God ; and there is none other but he :

33. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.

He was not, however, yet in it. He must be first in Christ, or else all his knowledge and discretion would stand him in no stead. He had one eye of the mind opened to see the excellency and necessity of these commands ; he only wanted the other opened to see his defect of performance.

Had he seen this, his next step would have been to Christ. Are we so near the kingdom of God?

34. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

Christ was only severe to his enemies, he is even now willing to teach by his Holy Spirit, the most deplorably ignorant, who are willing to receive the kingdom of God as little children.—*Edit.*

SECTION XLII.

Chap. xii. ver. 35—44.

CHRIST WARNS HIS DISCIPLES, AND COMMENDS THE
CHARITY OF A WIDOW.

35. And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?

36. For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

37. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son?

Christ was, as he was a man, the son of David; and as God, he was David's Lord. An ordinary Christian now knows what the learned Pharisees did not. The most important matter for securing our salvation through him, is to call him Lord *in spirit*. St. Paul tells us,—1 Cor. xii. 3,—that, "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," *i. e.* no man can acknowledge him, with a true faith, to be our Lord and Saviour, but by the Holy Ghost.

37. And the common people heard him gladly.

They may, now, both hear and understand him, if they please, notwithstanding their excuses. They have fewer

hindrances in the way than others, if they would but know it. The will, the will is all : nothing else in rich or poor receives Christ.

In this passage, Christ gives the Jews, and through them all others, a proof of his right to be their Lord ; and, withal convinces them of their blindness in the scripture.

38. And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market places,

39. And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts :

Those who are justly entitled to distinction, and a higher place, may take these without sin ; the harm is in being fond of them.

40. Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers : these shall receive greater damnation.

These scribes, though they had great knowledge, and practised great strictness of devotion, yet they were capable of great enormities : in a word, they were men, and could be nothing else while they were enemies to Christ. Greater condemnation is, however, reserved for them, for imposing on others, and thinking to impose on God, by a show of piety. Prayers for base ends, are confessedly worse than none. But consider whether they are not so with us, a mockery of God, and the greatest cheat we can put upon ourselves, when our heart is not in them.

41. And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury : and many that were rich cast in much.

42. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

43. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury :

44. For all they did cast in of their abundance ; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

Observe, how Christ's judgment differs from our's : if we were to see a poor man, or woman, doing so, we should be apt to reflect on them, if not call them fools. But Jesus saw her heart, as he does ours, and will judge us according to them at the last day. May God grant, that they may stand the test of that judgment. They will, if Christ be formed in them, the hope of glory.

SECTION XLIII.

Chap. xiii. ver. 1—13.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY FORETOLD.

1. And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here !

Little did they think how near the temple and city were to their end. We are also apt to depend upon youth, health, or strength, when death may be even at the door.

2. And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings ? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

4. Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled ?

Christ thought it proper in some measure to satisfy their curiosity ; but the main drift of his answer was to caution them, and through them, all others, against being surprised or deceived.

5. And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you :

We are under no unavoidable necessity of being deceived, in what concerns our eternal salvation. We are first willing to be deceived, and then it is easy for others to deceive us.

6. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

But not those who know Christ. They have a touchstone in themselves, faith and love, by which to try deceivers, and false doctrines, and God will help them in the use of it. John x. 4,—“ The sheep follow him : for they know his voice.”

7. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled : for such things must needs be ; but the end shall not be yet.

8. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom : and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles : these are the beginnings of sorrows.

9. But take heed to yourselves : for they shall deliver you up to councils ; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten : and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

Such times of trial have, at different periods, awaited the disciples of Christ, and they may come to them again. But let us keep close to God, and then we need not fear. Who knows how near we may be to such a time !

10. And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

By the mercy of God it was early published to this nation, and is still preached to us. The Lord make us thankful for it, in our conversion by it. Sad will be our doom, if we do not value so great a blessing, and improve it to our own salvation. We may mention in few words what the gospel is. It is the declaration of God's will to receive all

returning sinners, and of their acceptance only for Christ's sake. And the end of it is, that we may walk in the comfort of so great a mercy, and in the sense of it live unto God in all holy obedience; knowing that we are thereunto called; and that otherwise we are faithless, and do not receive it in truth and sincerity.

11. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

That is, at such times. Then commit yourselves wholly to God: you shall not want help.

12. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

Hatred of Christ shall get the better of natural affection.

13. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

And is it not so at all times, that the disciples of Christ are hated? Are not men's natures the same now as they were then? Or has Satan lost his will to stir up their hatred of Christ, of his ways, of his people? Let a man stand for Christ, and be more godly than his neighbours, and then see if he will not be a bye-word among them; and be worse used when they have it in their power. "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." This is alike true at all times. The end crowns the work. Though we make a beginning with Christ, it will signify nothing, if we do not hold out to the last.

SECTION XLIV.

Chap. xiii. ver. 14—23.

SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING.

14. But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not,

The destructive Roman army ; called abomination by Christ, because they were idolaters, and had the figures of their idols on their standards.

14. (Let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judæa flee to the mountains :

15. And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take anything out of his house :

16. And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

17. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days !

18. And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

19. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

20. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved : but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

God did also deliver other Jews for their sakes : for the days of vengeance were shortened on account of the elect, and many escaped with them. Those whom the world hates, God's faithful children and servants, are its preservers.

21. And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ ; or, lo, he is there ; believe him not :

22. For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

It is a great mystery that God should suffer such signs and wonders to be wrought. But none would be deceived by them, who were not first blinded by their own hearts.

23. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

If we perish it is not for want of warning.

In this section Christ paints in lively colours the miseries that were coming on the Jews; God's own people, and of whom it had been said, whosoever touched them, touched the apple of his eye, Zech. ii. 8, that is, that it wounded himself in a very tender part. But sin was found upon them, and they must smart for it: yea and suffer deeper than others. Let the false Christian remember this; and that a hotter hell is preparing for such.

SECTION XLV.

Chap. xiii. ver. 24—37.

CHRIST WARNS US TO BE PREPARED FOR HIS COMING.

24. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,

25. And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

26. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

27. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

Mr. Adam interprets these verses as referring to the consummation of all things: the editor considers them relating to the destruction of Jerusalem; though he thinks that destruction was intended to shadow forth a still wider destruction, when the frame of the world shall be broken to pieces.

28. Now learn a parable of the fig-tree ; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near :

29. So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

30. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.

31. Heaven and earth shall pass away ; but my words shall not pass away.

The word of Christ, this generation shall not pass away, limits the time to the destruction of Jerusalem. For that generation did not pass away till the gospel was fully preached from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum.—*Edit.*

32. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

Did not Christ know the day, or the time?—Yes, but it was no part of his office when he was in the world to make it known. Just as St. Paul says, 1 Cor. ii. 2, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified ;” that is, I determined not to speak of anything else.

33. Take ye heed, watch and pray : for ye know not when the time is.

Christ not only warns us to take heed, but tells us how, namely, by watching and praying. Have your eye upon your work under Christ, and upon the time of your death, as duly as if your life was every moment in danger of being surprised. And remember that watching will avail you nothing, without prayer. Who is a Christian? He who watches and prays? Is he who does not watch and pray, no Christian? No, no more than he is in heaven just now. If this comes home to any one who reads these words, let it ; and let such an one pray to God to cut him to the heart, and bring him as an humble believer to Christ for pardon and salvation. But take notice, that by praying I do not mean saying, or hearing prayers at church merely, though it

were twice every Sunday : but praying in secret, and with the heart, at all times, as a beggar does for an alms.

34. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

The departure of Christ from the world makes us think as little of him, as if he would never return. And yet how near may the hour of death, or the hour of his return, be ! Have you ever reflected what your proper work in this world is ? Do you read the scripture to know what it is ? Did you ever say to yourselves, I must have faith in Christ, and possess a faithful heart towards him, or I am undone ? The porter whom Christ has commanded to watch is the minister of religion, who is to watch for you, and you are also to watch for yourselves.

35. Watch ye therefore : for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockerowing, or in the morning :

We generally show that we are not of Christ's mind, since we make our ignorance of the time when Christ shall come to call us away, a reason why we neglect to watch.

36. Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

If he should come to you this very hour, would not this indeed be sudden, and a great surprise ? Most men die suddenly, let them be overtaken by death whenever they may, since they do not look for it a day beforehand. Therefore let us awake out of sleep, and think it high time.

37. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

Do we think that these words of Christ would take more effect upon us, if we were to hear Christ himself speak them ? He does indeed speak them, even to us at this and every moment ; he tells us so himself ; I say unto all, Watch.

SECTION XLVI.

Chap. xiv. ver. 1—9.

A WOMAN POURETH OINTMENT UPON CHRIST'S HEAD.

1. After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.

2. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.

These reasonings of Christ's enemies were overruled for accomplishing the prophecies which went before concerning the death he should die.—*Edit.*

3. And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.

Are you so poor that you have nothing costly to bestow on the Saviour? No. Have you not a heart? Give him that, and whatever you do for him will be this box of ointment. If you could give him the world without it, he would despise both the gift and the giver.

4. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?

The best acts of one who is devoted to Christ are liable to be found fault with, by an envious and graceless mind.—*Edit.*

5. For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor.

The objection to the act seemed plausible, yet it was not the real one, but a pretence. Alas! how often do we endeavour to impose on ourselves and on others by feigned words!—*Edit.*

5. And they murmured against her.

6. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

What are we if he cannot say this of us in many instances? Let, indeed, all the world be angry with us, and murmur at us, if we do but please Christ.

7. For ye have the poor with you always, and whosoever ye will ye may do them good:

We may, and ought, and *can*, if we are but habitually willing, be always helpful to them.

7. But me ye have not always.

Christ speaks this with respect to his bodily presence with his disciples. Yet he tells us, that whatever we do for his sake, he accounts as done to himself. Matt. xxv. 40.

8. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

It will be a blessed thing to have this testimony from Christ. We are all apt to say this of ourselves; but there is a day coming that will try us. Let us search out this matter beforehand. And perhaps we need not go far for a proof. Have we done all we could *to-day*? Have we prayed to God, through Jesus Christ. Do we make a habit of praying to God in secret? Without this, we may think what we please, but we do nothing for ourselves, or for the glory of Christ, or for the promotion of his kingdom? Our Lord spoke the latter part of the verse for the apostles. They thought not of his death and burial. They did not choose to understand him upon that head, though he had mentioned it so often; and therefore he takes occasion to remind them of that event. Is not this generally our own case? Christ, indeed, speaks plainly enough. Why then do we complain for want of knowledge? Why do we not understand him? We will not.

9. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Who could have certainly known that this would be recorded, but Christ? You may be able to discover several other traces of Christ's foreknowledge in this chapter.

In this woman we have an instance of lively faith in Christ, and love of him: she grudged no expense to show her love to the Saviour. Christ applauded her action, and would have it left upon record, not so much for the costliness of it, but for the love which she therein displayed. Even the poor widow's mite was a great gift in Christ's esteem, because he saw the heart from which it came. He looks at nothing else in us. We are all apt to say, we have good hearts; but is the love of Christ in them? O let us make our hearts answer this question.

SECTION XLVII.

Chap. xiv. ver. 10—25.

THE BETRAYAL OF JESUS BY JUDAS.

10. And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.

11. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

Was there never but one Judas in the world? What are we, when we let Christ go for the world, or for our own sins? Is not this selling him?

12. And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?

13. And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto

them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.

14. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

15. And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.

16. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

As the disciples found as Jesus had said unto them, so shall we, in all that he has promised, if we will receive it and obey him; if not, we shall find it in all that he hath threatened.

In these verses we have another proof of the divine foreknowledge of Jesus Christ, in his foretelling the disciples exactly how everything would fall.

17. And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.

18. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily, I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.

Our sins betrayed Christ first, else Judas could not have done it. There is a terrible sting in these words, "One of you which eateth with me." Let the false-hearted Christian think of them.

19. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?

Let us put this question to ourselves. Let each one of us ask, do I pretend to be a disciple of Christ? and do I yet betray and crucify him by my sinfulness and unbelief?

20. And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.

21. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

Judas would have a sorer punishment than others; but the woe belongs, more or less, to all that are like him.

22. And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat : this is my body.

To this command, take, eat, alas ! how many, in effect, too frequently say we will not : and not a few always refuse ; even of those who say that they do all they can.

23. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them : and they all drank of it.

24. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many.

Each of the expressions, This is my body, This is my blood, signifies the token of remission, through my body broken, and blood shed ; of union with me, and newness of life in virtue of it. This is a sacramental eating and drinking. I can never believe that those persons have anything to do with Christ, who carelessly and frequently turn away from the sacrament of the supper of the Lord.

25. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

We shall know what this means, if we are accounted worthy to sit down with Christ in his kingdom.

SECTION XLVIII.

Chap. xiv. ver. 26—42.

CHRIST FORETELS THE FLIGHT OF ALL THE DISCIPLES,
AND THE DENIAL OF PETER.

26. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

27. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night : for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

28. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

He does not say he will forsake them for ever, for deserting him ; he knew their eyes would soon be opened. So he bears with us while there is hope. Let us not abuse his patience, but meet him as the apostles did, according to his appointment.

29. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.

Here again was man's confidence, and man's strength. We shall presently see what will follow this resolution of Peter.

30. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

It may seem strange that Peter thus forewarned as he was, should not be proof against the temptation, and stand fast when he heard the cock crow. Alas ! no ; he could not stand, nor shall we, if we neglect the means here prescribed, and sleep as he did, when we are charged to watch !

31. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

32. And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane : and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

He was just entering upon his dreadful agony, and knew of no way of arming himself against it but by prayer. And have *we* no need to pray ? Yes ; but we are not concerned for our souls, or not sensible of the danger they are in, and therefore have no will to pray.

33. And he taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy ;

34. And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death : tarry ye here, and watch.

Follow Christ in his agony, with deep consideration, that you may never know what it is in your own persons.

35. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

36. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee ; take away this cup from me ; nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

Christ does not pray the Father to take away his cup of passion, but of desertion. It seems to me that this was rather the expression of what he felt than what he desired ; the cry of nature under intolerable anguish, and not the act of his will. For he therefore came into the world that he might suffer ; and could not desire to be excused from it. And the passage plainly speaks thus to us ; how can *we* endure, what we here see lay so heavy upon Christ ? The passage forces us to say, in spite of ourselves, Lord, keep us from it, and from the sin which will bring us to it.

37. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou ? couldst thou not watch one hour ?

How many such well-spent hours do you suppose we shall have to think of when we come to die ?

38. Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

This is Christ's remedy in all straits, yet alas ! it is but little applied by us.

38. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.

This is not spoken as any ground of excuse, if we do fall ; but to prevent it, by showing us how we are to be supported. And this saying from the mouth of him, who knew what was in man, is much to be observed. There may be discernment of what is right, with a real purpose and willingness of spirit to do it ; but the flesh, that is, man, with his pride of reason, and boasted abilities, fails wretchedly in the execution. Grace must do what nature cannot. We have full warning given us of our weakness ; and like men who are surrounded with powerful enemies, and in continual danger of being surprised, must not only be always upon our guard, but have the necessary aid at

hand, by looking up to heaven for it in prayer. Put this in practice, be humble, be vigilant, be a man of prayer, and thou mayest defy the world, the flesh, and the devil.

39. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.

40. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.

Alas! when Christians sleep in the season of temptation, they awake too late when their feet are already in the snare which Satan has laid for them —*Edit.*

41. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

When Christ said, “sleep on now,” he meant that they had lost their opportunity of watching and praying, and with it their strength also, as it soon appeared. The watching and praying of the disciples was not for Christ, but for themselves. Whether they watched and prayed, or not, to him it was all one: he was sufficient for himself: the hour for which he longed was come. Blessed Jesus! and blessed hour for us!

42. Rise up, let us go: lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

Here is another instance of the foreknowledge of Christ, and therefore an evidence of his divinity.—*Edit.*

SECTION XLIX.

Chap. xiv. ver. 43—65.

CHRIST IS BETRAYED, AND IMPIOUSLY CONDEMNED BY
THE JEWISH COUNCIL.

43. And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders.

44. And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he ; take him, and lead him away safely.

45. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master ; and kissed him.

May God grant that we may not be so base towards our blessed Saviour, and that he may not have any such treacherous friends among us.

46. And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

Go along with all that is said in this manner. *My* sins made his soul sorrowful unto death ; *my* sins betrayed him ; *my* sins laid hands on him. All this he willingly endured for my sake ; and I am resolved they shall grieve him no more.

47. And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

This was Peter. He was ready enough to do what he was not bidden, and that for which Christ would give him no thanks.

48. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me ?

49. I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not : but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

They must be fulfilled in every tittle concerning Christ. See Psalm xxii. and Isaiah lii. They will also be fulfilled concerning *us*, either in our salvation, or in our destruction. Let us hear and fear, and do no more wickedly.

50. And they all forsook him, and fled.

51. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body ; and the young men laid hold on him :

52. And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

This flight he chose rather than to fall into their hands. This shows the great fright into which they were all thrown.

53. And they led Jesus away to the high priest : and with him were assembled all the chief priests, and the elders, and the scribes,

54. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest ; and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.

55. And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death ; and found none.

56. Form any bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.

57. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,

58. We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.

59. But neither so did their witness agree together.

60. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing ? what is it which these witness against thee ?

61. But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed ?

Christ stood in the place of sinners, and he bare their sins in his own person, and therefore he would not maintain his innocence, because we, whom he thus represented, cannot.

62. And Jesus said, I am : and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Christ would not deny that he was the Son of the blessed God, because it was the truth, though he knew that it would cost him his life. He however adds, that they should see him appearing in human flesh, like the Son of man, and in the power of God they should behold him coming to judge the quick and the dead.

63. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses ?

64. Ye have heard the blasphemy : what think ye ? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

Think not so much of the Jews as of your own sins: *they* condemned him,—they exposed the Son of God to this opprobrious usage.

65. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy; and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

Christ hid not his face from shame and spitting for our sakes: may we through his grace be partakers of his sufferings, that we also may be sharers with him in his glory, in heaven.—*Edit.*

SECTION L.

Chap. xiv. ver. 66—72.

PETER DENIETH CHRIST.

66. And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest:

67. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.

68. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch, and the cock crew.

In Peter's denial of Christ we have a lamentable instance of human frailty, and of what we are when left to ourselves. Who so stout as Peter but an hour or two before, and here he is fallen into no less a sin than that of denying his Master? The advice to all is, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Be not high-minded, but fear." And, especially, remember that Peter would not have fallen thus shamefully if he had taken Christ's advice, to watch and pray.

69. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.

70. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.

71. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.

72. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

Peter's root was good, and he immediately recovered himself. Whenever we are so unhappy as to fall into sin, we cannot too soon call to mind the words of Jesus, or be too soon cut to the heart for it. But, Lord, keep us from sinning, lest we never repent. O what have I to think of! and yet not one tear!

In this chapter and in the following, is the relation of Christ's submitting to be apprehended, tried, condemned, and crucified, as a malefactor. What almighty love was here; and who can think worthily of it! What is our condition, and what is sin, in God's account, when his own Son must become a curse for us! And how sad will be our doom, if we slight so great a mercy! You do not disbelieve or deny this. But then we are apt to think confusedly of it. We are willing to take it upon hearsay. It does not come home to us. We do not, every one, think enough of our own sins, and that they crucified Jesus Christ. And till we do, there can be no faith in him, or salvation by him. Some perhaps may think themselves safe, and that they need not fear sin, because Christ died for it. This is turning Christ's remedy into poison. Such are blind indeed, if they do not see the dreadful guilt of all sin, God's hatred of it, and the necessity of forsaking it, when Christ hanging upon the cross is placed before them. May the Lord deliver us from such awful guilt! Amen.

SECTION LI.

Chap. xv. ver. 1—14.

JESUS IS ACCUSED BEFORE PILATE.

1. And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

Our sins bound and delivered him to Pilate. Look well at this picture. Fancy yourselves bound, and going to be delivered up, not to Pilate, but to the devil. See in this glass what sin will do for you, if you do not come to Christ with penitent hearts to have the guilt of it taken away. Think, on the other hand, what it is to be presented to God by Christ, washed in his blood.

2. And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.

He would not deny that he was the King of the Jews, though it was the most dangerous confession he could make. Nevertheless Pilate was so over-ruled by the secret counsel and power of God, as to be willing to acquit him, and give a clear testimony of his innocence, with respect to any seditious purposes, which he could possibly entertain, of making himself a temporal king.

3. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.

4. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee.

5. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.

Though Jesus was the only sinless man who ever lived, he would not plead in his own defence, because he bore our sins. He would not say that he was innocent, because you and I could not, if we had stood in his place. Think sometimes what answer you will make, if God should lay sin to your charge at the day of judgment.

6. Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

7. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

The prejudice of these wicked Jews against Christ fitted them to become fit subjects for Satan to exercise his temptations upon. The state of our hearts is the most important matter with us all. May God purge out the leaven of malice and wickedness from them; and not lead us into temptation; but deliver us from the evil one.—*Edit.*

8. And the multitude crying aloud, began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.

9. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews.

10. For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.

11. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

12. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

13. And they cried out again, Crucify him.

14. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

It was necessary that Jesus should both be condemned, and declared innocent by his judge. What a remarkable providence was this! If he had not suffered he would not have redeemed us; and if he had not been innocent he could not; neither if he had not been declared innocent, could we have received and trusted in him, as the Saviour of the world.

SECTION LII.

Chap. xv. ver. 15—26.

CHRIST IS CRUCIFIED.

15. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

Can *we* ever be so undervalued? *We* can suffer nothing that we do not deserve, and yet how little can we bear? How does our blood boil within us, at a small affront, or injury, and how lasting is our resentment! Well might Christ say, "Learn of me to be meek and lowly." And so the Christians did once; but those days are past.

16. And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Prætorium; and they call together the whole band.

17. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head.

They clothed Christ in a robe of purple,—in a kingly robe, in scorn. And with a crown of thorns. Our sins served to make up this crown of thorns. Let them pierce you to the heart. Christ wore the painful crown gladly, that they might not be the never-dying worm at our hearts.

18. And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

Do you say truly, what they said in scorn and mockery? He was and is King of the Jews, and of all flesh; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. He has all power given him in heaven and earth, to govern, bless, and reward his faithful servants; and he shall be my Lord and King to save and reign over *me*. Nothing can make you Christians but saying this from the heart.

19. And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.

20. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

21. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

Christ should have borne his cross himself, as malefactors usually did; but probably he was faint and weary, and could not. Well, my friends; that is a good heart which follows the blessed Jesus in every step of his sufferings; and says, what did he endure for me, and what return does he expect from me! If we do not think thus, what are we?

22. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

23. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh; but he received it not.

They gave him a stupefying potion, according to custom in such cases, to lessen the sense of pain; but mingled with gall, according to St. Matthew, to make it bitter and unpalatable. But he would not drink it. Either he would not have his senses dozed, or his pains lessened.

24. And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

25. And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

26. And the superscription of his accusation was written over,
THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Pilate wrote this title in derision; but it was a blessed truth. He was the King of the Jews, not in a temporal sense, as they expected, but spiritually, to bear rule in their souls, and to subdue sin in them. He is our king, and we are his covenanted people, when we receive him into our hearts by faith, and submit to his gracious rule. This is salvation, and nothing else is so. O! think as you read this chapter, and as ever you desire it should be made a blessing to you, that all he endured was to bring you to this, and how surely you will perish if it does not.

SECTION LIII.

Chap. xv. ver. 27—38.

CHRIST'S DEATH.

27. And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

28. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

Christ was numbered with the transgressors; that we might be numbered with the children of God.

29. And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,

30. Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

They thought this was a sure proof that he was not the Christ, the Saviour of the world, because he did not save himself. How blind is man! It is a thousand to one but that we should have thought then just as they did. But his death was our life, his cross our crown. We know this now; let us not come short of it, but trust in the merits of his death, and crucify that sin in ourselves, which crucified him.

31. Likewise also the chief priests mocking, said among themselves, with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.

32. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

Our blessed Saviour endured these cruel taunts and reproaches on our account: let us be willing to bear reproach for him, and not be ashamed of him and of his salvation.
—*Edit.*

33. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

This darkness shadowed forth that darkness which Christ sustained in his own mind.

34. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

So many a poor sinner cries out, when God withdraws himself from him, though he is not actually forsaken any more than Christ was. Learn from hence how dreadful a thing it will be to be finally forsaken of God. How shall we be able to endure separation from him in the darkness of hell, when Jesus thus cried out for being forsaken of him but a little time?

35. And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.

They wrested his words in scorn; and meant that he might call long enough before Elias would come to take him down.

36. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

The providence of God, by the influence of human motives, caused them to cease from troubling the Saviour any further. Let us see that providence in our own behalf, and thank God that his kingdom rules over the hearts of the wicked at all times.—*Edit.*

37. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

His loud voice showed that his life was whole within him; and that this was a cry of joy and triumph, for having finished his sufferings on our behalf. He gave up the ghost, of his own accord. The Jews could not have taken his life from him, if he himself had not spoken the breath out of his body. And who but Christ, the Son of God, could have done this? According to our faith in his death, and the use we make of it, we live or die for ever.

38. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

This was intended to show the end of the Jewish peculiarity ; and that henceforth all nations should have access to God.

SECTION LIV.

Chap. xv. ver. 39—47.

CHRIST'S BURIAL.

39. And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

To say this, in truth, is to possess saving faith. This great truth is never revealed savingly to us, though we hear ever so much of it outwardly, till the Spirit sets it home upon our hearts.

40. There were also women looking on afar off : among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome ;

This is mentioned to the praise of these women, and for our imitation. They had followed him, and ministered unto him in his lifetime, and did not forsake him in his death, when all the disciples, except St. John, fled from him.

41. (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him ;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

Their names are not only in the scriptures, but in the Book of Life.—*Edit.*

42. And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,

43. Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.

True faith is here described by waiting for the kingdom of God, that is, believing, expecting, and preparing for it. Such a faith will make us bold for Christ.

44. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.

45. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

46. And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

47. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

Let this be the use and improvement of all our knowledge of Christ; let us so live, as not to fear death. Christ has by his death taken out the sting of it, and triumphed over it, not for himself, but for our sakes. If we live members of Christ, and die in the habit of well doing, and in the faith of Christ, the grave will give us up again as it did him, to our everlasting happiness. Lord grant that our faith in thy sight, may never be reprov'd. O Jesus, live in us, that we may die unto thee, and live with thee for ever in heaven. Amen.

In Christ's death, let us read the guilt and condemnation of sin. Sin unpurg'd, must have punishment, not only in this life, but in the next. Consider, how plain this is from Christ's sufferings for it. If the justice of God could have been satisfied with the punishment of it in this life, the sinner might have suffered for himself. But the desert of sin is eternal torment; and from that nothing but the death of Christ could deliver us. Believe this steadfastly, and that Christ, the Son of God, with his own pains and sufferings, has ransomed you from the eternal pains of hell,

and then your hearts will be with him. You will see the greatness of your danger, and the magnitude of your deliverance, in the riches of his love; and think it your duty and safety to live to him that died for you. This is the right knowledge and improvement of the death of Christ. And whatever you do, think only of your sins; and that Christ died for them, as much as if there had never been another sinner in the world. You lose all by not bringing the matter home to yourselves. Christ can do nothing for you, till you know assuredly, by conviction from the Holy Spirit, that your own sins crucified him.

SECTION LV.

Chap. xvi. ver. 1—8.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS DECLARED TO THREE
OF HIS FEMALE DISCIPLES.

1. And when the sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

This they did to show their love and respect to Christ. These were good hearts. Never talk of your's, till Christ is in them. Do you love him so well, as to be at any cost for him? A small offering for his sake, and from faith in the heart, will be precious in his sight.

2. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

The first day of the week is now the Christian sabbath; the day being changed from Saturday, the Jewish sabbath, to Sunday, because the latter was the day of Christ's resurrection, and therefore, ever since, called the Lord's day. Do you ever think of this on the Sunday, and ask whether you are risen with Christ, so as to set

your affections on things above; knowing assuredly, that if you are not thus risen with him, you cannot be raised by him to everlasting life.

3. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

They thought it would be impossible for them: so we think there are difficulties in the way of our salvation, never to be overcome. But the next verse hath both reproof and comfort for us.

4. And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

It was moved by an unseen power. What cannot the same power do for us? There is a stubborn will, which must be overcome. Lord, help here. All the hindrance is on our part. It is a blessed time, when we see the great stone of unbelief, a worldly heart, and strong corruptions, rolled away, and know of a truth, that God has helped, and is helping with us.

5. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

6. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

What is this conduct of the women to us? Can we say one by one, that we seek the crucified Jesus, as our life, hope, and whole salvation; and that we desire to find him, as risen to us, and for us, in our own resurrection to a new life of faith and obedience?

7. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

All is told us in the scripture, and hearing is the foundation of our faith, as seeing was of the faith of these women. Christ says, "Blessed are they that have not seen,

and yet have believed.”—John xx. 29. Make this blessing your own, and then you will see Christ in his glory.

8. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid.

Who were they that followed Christ to his death when the apostles forsook him? Who were they that were first at the sepulchre? Women, as unlearned as any Christians now. But they had love to Christ in their hearts; and that is of more worth than all the learning in the world; that is, God’s learning, the effect of his teaching and influence; what he can teach one as well as another; and if a poor man, or woman, comes short of it, it is because that person despises it. Cannot a poor person read the Bible? Or if not, cannot he pray? Cannot he attend constantly on the word preached? And what can *any* do without prayer? Try what it will do for you. Give up your vain excuses. You may seek after Christ, and find him to your comfort, and if you please, have your hearts filled with his love.

SECTION LVI.

Chap. xvi. ver. 9—18.

SEVERAL APPEARANCES OF CHRIST.

9. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

Christ’s first appearance was to one who had been a great sinner. This is not mentioned without a good reason. What encouragement is here to repentance!

10. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.

11. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

The incredulity of the disciples affords a proof that the resurrection of Christ was not received on slight evidence.—*Edit.*

12. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.

13. And they went and told it to the residue: neither believed they them.

Unbelief was not the solitary sin of Thomas, it is the common sin of our fallen nature.—*Edit.*

14. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

Though their slowness of belief was a fault in them, it has resulted in a benefit to us. We learn also from hence, that they were not willing, and easy to be imposed upon, in the matter of Christ's resurrection.

15. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Preach the gospel, to the Jews first, and then to the rest of the world. Do you know what the gospel is? And are you ready to give an answer to every man who asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you? The gospel is remission of sins, peace with God, and a right to eternal life, not for the sake of anything we are, or can do, but only for Christ's sake; and through this faith, a will and power to please God in all holy obedience. O that this blessed gospel was in all our hearts!

16. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

God's mercy in Christ, the necessity of repentance to

bring him to it, and of holiness to secure it to him. Believing, is believing all these, and not only one or two of them. Whoever makes an open profession of religion, and of his faith, by being baptized into it, and lives worthily of it, shall be saved. He shall be a happy man, in the favour of God here, and shall have the eternal enjoyment of him, hereafter. How plainly do they contradict scripture, and what a desperate hazard do they run, who refuse to be baptized ! The man who believes not the necessity of repentance, and of faith in Christ, for pardon, newness of life, and salvation, shall be damned. Consider who says this ! What kind of hearts are those which are fast shut up in unbelief, against these terrible threatenings ?

17. And these signs shall follow them that believe ; In my name shall they cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ;

18. They shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

These signs followed the apostles, and many others, till the gospel was planted in the world. We do not need these signs. All is laid before us in the scriptures, for our conviction and belief, and God thinks this evidence sufficient. The command now given to us is, Let them hear Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles: if they hear not them, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

SECTION LVII.

Chap. xvi. ver. 19—20.

CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

19. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

All power was given him, to govern, bless, and preserve all true believers, and take them to himself in heaven; and also to destroy his enemies.

20. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

St. Paul, it is probable, preached in England; others followed him into our country: and the Bible has always preached to us. We have our choice, whether we will receive the preaching of the apostles, or perish, by rejecting it. Though the apostles are not present in person, their words are with us, and the Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to work with them, and to make them effectual to our salvation. God grant that this may be our prayer, and then he will confirm the word to us, by that great miracle of our conversion to him. Amen.

St. Mark concludes his gospel as the other Evangelists do, with the account of our Lord's resurrection, and some proofs of it. Our faith is built on the miracles of Christ; the greatest of which is, his resurrection from the dead. By his resurrection, he was chiefly declared to be the Son of God with power; and the principal thing in the office of the apostles, in proof of the divine mission of Christ, was to bear witness of it. Now to what end were the gospels written, and Christ's miracles recorded? St. John tells us plainly,—“That we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name.”—John xx. 31. Has our reading and hearing the Holy Scriptures brought us to this knowledge and desire? Are we come to this point, that without Christ there is no life in us? Do we know that we are dead in trespasses and sins, and that we can have life from him only by believing? Are we indeed believers? Do we believe that Christ died for our sins, and conquered death for us by rising from the dead? Do we live in this hope, and make it our great business in the world to prepare for

his coming? Do we believe that as he died and rose again, so we should die unto sin and rise again unto righteousness? Do we find that we have any such faith, as purifies our hearts, and turns them from the world unto God? This, and nothing but this, is our life from Christ. You then belong to him, and have your lot with him, when you believe in him for the remission of your sins, and your acceptance with God, and in the virtue of this faith live to him that died for you.

These questions are asked to inform ourselves what we should be. Let us deal fairly with ourselves, and not think we are, what we are not; for then we shall never believe. If we believe, we must give way to the knowledge of ourselves; and perhaps, with some of us, that is all to begin. Let us think, before another day passes over our heads, whether we ever were searched by the Word of God, and what it is to live and die without Christ.

We have now finished our reading on the gospel of Saint Mark: with what effect, God knows; and you will know at the day of judgment. O God, make speed to save us. O Lord, make haste to help us. Amen.—A. D. 1757.

ST. LUKE.

SECTION I.

Chap. i. ver. 1—4.

THE PREFACE OF ST. LUKE.

1. Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

2. Even as they delivered them unto us, which, from the beginning, were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word;

3. It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

What sort of Christians are those who know little or nothing of what they are to believe? And why do they not, but because they will not? Can those who plead ignorance say that they have taken all proper pains to instruct themselves in christian knowledge? Will they say this at the day of judgment? No; they cannot. It is evident, therefore, that the cause of men's ignorance is unconcern for their souls. They feel no want of Christ, and therefore slight the account of his birth, life, and death, and never ask themselves how they are to be better for him. If St. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, had agreed in showing an infallible way in which men should be able to thrive in the world, men would not suffer a word of that which they had taught to escape them. Do we not know in our consciences that this is the truth?

4. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

This is written not only for Theophilus, but for all others. This is our call to hear and be instructed. Let us think what enemies we are to ourselves, and whether it is possible we should have any concern for our souls, when we can suffer days and weeks to pass without looking into our Bibles. The end of all scripture is to bring us to the knowledge of Christ, as the only Saviour of sinners; to the outward knowledge of him first, that by means of it we may attain to the inward, and hear him speaking to us in his word, that we may hear him speaking to us in our hearts. Take especial notice, therefore, that the outward, historical knowledge of Christ, though necessary in order to the inward, will do us no good without it. Let us bring our hearts to the reading and hearing the word of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us pray God to open it to our hearts, that they may burn within us, and be athirst for Christ! Have we, indeed, come to him? Let us think what our condition is this day and hour, if we have not. For the love of God, let us take knowledge of it; and let St. Luke be the physician of our souls; let him bring us to the great physician Jesus Christ, that he may be formed in us the hope of glory.

SECTION II.

Chap. i. ver. 5—23.

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST FORETOLD.

5. There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

6. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless.

This is that which St. Paul also tells us he did, Phil. iii. 6; but neither he nor they were therefore righteous for heaven. They must have a son born to prepare them and all others for Christ, by whom only we are justified. But let their practice shame *us*, who, with our knowledge of Christ, are so much less exact in observing the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, respecting his worship, and our whole walk.

7. And they had no child; because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

8. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

9. According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

10. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

11. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

The former prayers of Zacharias were heard, for he had doubtless left off praying for a child. It was so much out of the course of nature, and beyond his expectation, that when the angel told him he should have a son, he did not believe it. Observe how our prayers are upon record, and that God will infallibly answer them in his own time and way. The name of this son who was to be born, was John—God's mercy; not so much a blessing to his father, in his old age, as the forerunner of Christ, who is God's mercy to us all.

14. And thou shalt have joy and gladness: and many shall rejoice at his birth.

We shall rejoice at the birth of John, if he brings us to Christ, as the preacher of true repentance ; and there is no other way of being brought to the Saviour.

15. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink ; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

John shall turn them to Christ, who is evidently here called God ; as appears by the next words, "he shall go before *him*."

17. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just ; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

The aged and the young, the good and the bad, all ages and conditions, must be turned and prepared for Christ : the bad by an entire change of their lives ; the better sort, by seeing themselves lost without him. And, take notice, the turn is in the heart. It avails nothing what else is changed if the heart is not turned.

18. And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this ? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

In verse the 34th, the Virgin Mary says, "How shall this be ?" and both their words seem to imply a doubting mind. But God saw a difference in their hearts, belief in Mary, and unbelief in Zacharias.

19. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God ; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

20. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

Let us never question the promises of God, but endeavour to bring ourselves up to a full belief of them. It is harder for a convinced sinner to think that he can be for-

given, than it was for Zacharias to think that he should have a son. Let us set the word of God against all our fears.

21. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

22. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

23. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

The Lord will not allow his servants to doubt of his faithfulness in fulfilling the promises which he has made, without resenting the affront which it offers to his attributes of power and faithfulness. May the Lord ever keep us mindful of his word, wherein he hath caused us to hope.—*Edit.*

SECTION III.

Chap. i. ver. 24—38.

THE ANGEL'S VISIT TO MARY.

24. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,

25. Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

That she might be at leisure to think of the mercy which had been vouchsafed unto her, improve it, and praise God for it, as appears by the next verse. Have we ever betaken ourselves to solitude, to consider what God has done for us, and what we are doing in the world?

26. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women.

Mary was highly-favoured indeed to be the mother of God ! But carrying him in her womb was not her salvation. He must be born in her heart. He will in our's ; all was written to bring us to this birth.

29. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary : for thou hast found favour with God.

31. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

This name Jesus is a sweet name ! Fear not, repenting sinner : thy Jesus ; thy Saviour ; whenever thou comest unto God by him.

32. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest : and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David :

Christ shall have the temporal throne, before the end of the world ; and a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men, immediately.

33. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever : and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

All belong to the house of Jacob, who take Christ for their Lord and king to rule over them.

34. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man ?

She believed it would be, only she did not know the manner in which it would be accomplished. It is however the property of faith to trust Christ in the dark.

35. And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.

As being in his birth pure from all spot of sin. What is it then which makes any the children of God, but freedom from sin? He accounts none to be such, while he has sin to lay to their charge. And we can only be freed from this charge by Christ, as washed in his blood, sanctified by his Spirit, and accepted in his perfect righteousness.

36. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

This was said to encourage Mary in believing. Zacharias did not believe, and therefore was struck dumb: Mary believed, and had her faith strengthened still more by a fresh instance of God's power.

37. For with God nothing shall be impossible.

And all things are also possible to him that believeth. Mark ix. 23. Think of this, awakened sinner, when thy fears would hide Christ from thee. But till we are awakened, let us never talk of believing.

38. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

We do not readily think how great an act of faith and resignation this was in Mary. Her reputation was at stake with the man to whom she was espoused, and with all the world, and yet she gave up all to God. We may depend upon it that faith can never be without its trials. The world will put us hardly to it in some respect or other; but if we commit ourselves to God, we may defy it. May he enable us to say, Behold thy servant, be it unto me even as thou wilt.

SECTION IV.

Chap. i. ver. 39—55.

MARY'S VISIT TO ELISABETH.

39. And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda :

Mary had probably heard of Elisabeth's miraculous conception, and she hastened also to tell her what had happened to herself. This was true spiritual love and friendship.

40. And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

This was a joyful meeting of two pious women, who desired to communicate what God had done for them.

41. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb ; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost :

42. And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

The heart of every Christian can testify that Jesus has bestowed upon him infinite mercy, through his incarnation.

43. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me ?

Those who are holy are always humble. Well may we say, what are *we*, that God should do such great things for us ?

44. For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leapt in my womb for joy.

What are our feelings and affections toward the Lord, when we hear of these things, and consider that all was for our sakes.

45. And blessed is she that believed : for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

Let true Christians apply this to themselves. Blessed is every believer. God cannot deceive him. As sure as ever a man believes, Christ is his with all his benefits.

46. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

47. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

This is joy indeed. Can we say this? Do we long to say it? Let us consider what is the great wish of our hearts, and how we can possibly be Christians, if our hearts are not for Christ and his salvation.

48. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

Some of us make lowness of condition a pretence for neglecting the soul, and say, it is a hard world with us; and thus we keep our souls chained down to it. Mary, on the contrary, declares it to be the very reason of God's looking upon her. She was perhaps as poor as any of us; and we see in this instance, that God does not look the less kindly upon any for being in a low condition. The great want in all is poverty of spirit. Whenever we have that, let us be what we will in the world, we are in a way of being high and rich in God's favour. Let us think what we mean, when we take up this excuse;—Lord, I am poor, and therefore I resolve that my soul shall fare no better than my body.

49. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

God hath indeed done great things for us; even things for which the angels admire and praise God, and we, alas! overlook and despise for the little things which this world affords. Blessed is that man who can say, The Lord hath done to me great things; he hath given Christ for me, and he hath given me a heart to believe in him!

50. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

God's mercy is towards them that fear him, even to the

end of the world, whether they be high or low ; and it is on no other.

51. He hath shewed strength with his arm ; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

The Holy Spirit introduces those of low degree again. This expression is not repeated without just cause. The mighty are nothing in God's account, if their hearts do not stoop to him ; as, alas ! they seldom do. But though Mary was lowly, as well as poor, it does not follow as a matter of course, for these two are often far asunder. He overlooked the mighty to exalt a poor virgin.

53. He hath filled the hungry with good things ; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He hath filled these destitute ones with himself, the best of all good things. So he always does. Those who hunger after him, are empty vessels, and hence they are capable of receiving him. The rich, that is, all who are full of themselves, and feel no want of him, he leaves to their own miserable emptiness. Let us not wonder that we do not know, and receive more of Christ, and his blessings, when the hunger of our souls is for something else.

54. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy ;

55. As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

The seed of Abraham, are the heirs of his faith, who lay hold of the mercy that is offered to them, even the free forgiveness of their sins. But God, in virtue of all his promises, has Abraham's natural seed still in his eye. "So all Israel shall be saved."—Rom. xi. 26.

SECTION IV.

Chap. i. ver. 56—66.

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

56. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

This was a visit of anticipation of spiritual blessings, both to themselves and to the world. Happy are they who seek to promote the spiritual happiness of many.—*Edit.*

57. Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

58. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

It is our duty to rejoice with them that do rejoice, as well as to weep with them that weep.—*Edit.*

59. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.

60. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.

61. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.

62. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.

63. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.

64. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.

Our tongues are our glory, and their proper employment is to praise God and to edify one another. Alas! how frequently have we reason to mourn the offences which we commit with this little member! May the Lord help us to

give him praise with the best member that we have.
—*Edit.*

65. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them : and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judæa.

66. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be ! And the hand of the Lord was with him.

Men in general regard not the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands. And Christians often forget the motion of those wheels of divine Providence, which cease not to turn, though no one regard them. All who heard these things seemed to have forgotten them in the course of thirty years. Let us not forget the promises of God respecting our heavenly inheritance, which will, with most of us, if we are Christians, be in part realised before long.—*Edit.*

SECTION V.

Chap. i. ver. 67—80.

THE PROPHECY OF ZACHARIAS.

67. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

Can our hearts go along with Zacharias ? Take notice that in this prophecy Zacharias had his eyes turned to Christ. The mercy of his having a son was, as it were, swallowed up in the much greater mercy of his being the forerunner of Christ, and the opener of salvation to all. Does not this teach us, what that is upon which we should

have our eyes and our hearts fixed? What are all private, temporal blessings in comparison of this salvation?

Would it cut you to the heart, if you thought that you were to have no share in this redemption with which God has visited his people? But how can it be otherwise, if you do not seek after this, and make it the great end of your living?

69. And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

An horn of salvation, is an abundant, a mighty salvation.

70. As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

71. That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

That we should be saved from our spiritual enemies; that is, wicked spirits, our own lusts, death, and hell; from which none but Christ can deliver us.

72. To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

73. The oath which he swore to our father Abraham,

74. That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,

75. In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

See here what a Christian is, and what Christ does for us. Under the sense of our deliverance from the wrath of God by him, and under this sense only, can we serve God continually, with willing and free spirits, and in the love of holiness.

76. And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways:

77. To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

Here we are told what those ways are which John was

sent to prepare ; even the ways of salvation. Do we ask what salvation is ? The answer is here given ; it is “ the remission of our sins.”

78. Through the tender mercy of our God ; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,

79. To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

We become entitled to the remission of our sins, through the tender mercy of our God. We sit in darkness, and the shadow of death, we are lost and undone in ourselves ; we are snatched as brands out of the fire. When we lay hold on this mercy, by the exercise of repentance and faith, “ the dayspring from on high hath visited us ;” the light of heaven hath come into our souls ; Christ hath set our feet in the way of peace. May the Lord guide our feet into the way of salvation, and keep us in the way of peace !

80. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

John has been shown to you, in part, in this chapter ; and you will soon hear of him again ; but to no purpose, if he brings you not to Christ.

SECTION VI.

Chap. ii. ver. 1—12.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST ANNOUNCED TO THE SHEPHERDS.

1. And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

2. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

3. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

This was probably a registration in order to lay on a tax, though the tax was not immediately levied.—*Edit.*

4. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

5. To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

It was foretold by the prophet Micah, that Christ should be born at Bethlehem, and so it must be. It was a long and tedious journey, at that time of the year, from Nazareth to Bethlehem: especially as the way was through a hilly country. Mary had no thoughts of going there to be delivered, and yet to that place God brings her, by the Emperor's decree, just at the critical period. Learn, from hence, to trust to God, to believe his promises, and to leave all to his disposal. Though we may be many times in the dark, and ready to think it a hopeless case with us, the Lord never sleeps, but he is always working all things after the counsel of his own will, to bring about his own ends.

7. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Our sins and fallen state laid him there. Let us look for the cause of his humble dwelling in ourselves. If we would be better for his lying there, let us keep our hearts close to our own case. Who can be in more pitiable circumstances of meanness and distress, than the virgin mother of Jesus Christ, when there was no room for her and her husband in the inn? Was this the woman "highly favoured?" After this, let us never think anything hard that befalls us. Argue not from it, that you are therefore forgotten, or despised of God.

8. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

The angel brings good tidings, not only to the Jews, but to all the world: to every one of us, if we are willing to receive them. The next verse tells us what these good tidings are.

11. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

A Saviour from sin, and from its cursed effects, from the guilt and power of it, from our evil natures, and from the torments of hell. Do we feel our need of such a Saviour? Is this glad tidings to us? What answer do our hearts give at this moment! If our hearts were never humbled for sin, it is easy to answer for them, that this is cold news to us.

12. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

This was a thing to be considered, and at which they might well wonder. None but humble souls can enter into the meaning of this sign. We should have thought it more suitable, if Christ had been born in great state in a palace. But Christ begins to preach poverty of spirit, the moment he comes into the world.

Behold, in these verses, God's ways, and how his thoughts are not like ours! The blessed Virgin becomes a mother in the stable of an inn: the Lord of glory, and the Saviour of the world, laid in a manger;—his birth proclaimed from heaven first to a company of poor shepherds.

Here is great comfort and encouragement for the poor at all times, if they had but eyes to see it. What may they not look for at the hands of God? What should hinder his power in them now, if they do not hinder it themselves?

Verily, their mouths are stopped; and if a poor, man or woman, does not know and receive Christ, it is because the poor have as hard, and as proud hearts, as the rich.

SECTION VII.

Chap. ii. ver. 13—24.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST.

13. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Perhaps not one of the heavenly host was absent on this grand occasion. They were praising God for joy, that we might be of their number, and with them praise God for ever. The deliverance of man from the power of sin and Satan was accounted a thing of great importance with them, though in many cases it seems to be nothing in our eyes.

14. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Glory is, and always will be, given to God in heaven. The ethereal palaces ring with God's glory displayed in our salvation, though we are silent, and refuse him the just tribute of our praise. "And on earth peace,"—peace with God, and peace with all nature. There may be, there is peace, wherever Christ is truly known. "Good-will toward men,"—the good-will of God to men, who has displayed his mercy in our forgiveness; and has bestowed upon us a sense of his reconciliation; and a disposition of universal good-will of men towards one another. It was so intended; it should be so; and if it is not, we must answer for it.

15. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

It was but a little, in comparison, which the Lord had made known unto *them*. We have the advantage of them in many respects, and may know a great deal more of Christ than they did. "Let us go and see," is saying something : though we cannot go to him at Bethlehem, he still says to all, "Come unto me." Those who are taught by the Holy Spirit, know how they are to go to Christ.

16. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

They found that which was promised to them, and we shall find all that Christ has told us, to our great comfort. But let us do as the shepherds did ; let us make haste.

Another year, or even another month, may be too late to come to Christ. We are not sure of the time, and the longer we stay, the more indisposed we shall be to come to him.

17. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

Angels were the first preachers of Christ after his birth, and poor shepherds the next ; and God was with them.

18. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

They mused deeply upon what God was about to do in the earth.

19. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

We ought to do the same with the promises of God, and their accomplishment in Christ ; and might, if we were so disposed : we have many times opportunities to do so when

we do not. A pondering heart is a gracious heart, and cannot miss of salvation.

20. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

They heard and *saw*; we hear and *believe*; and one is as blessed as the other. The end of all is, that we may glorify and praise God.

21. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

22. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

23. (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

24. And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

The offering of the poor was two young pigeons. Joseph and Mary had not a lamb to bring, which was the common offering. Lev. xii. 8.

The Collect for the Circumcision will assist us to make a profitable use of this passage.—“Almighty God, whomadest thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man; grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit, that our hearts and all our members being mortified from all worldly lusts, we may in all things obey thy blessed will, through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

SECTION VIII.

Chap. ii. ver. 25—38.

SIMEON AND ANNA PROPHECY OF CHRIST.

25. And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

Let us not deceive ourselves. If we are not just and devout, we are in no proper state of mind becoming those, who wait for the consolation of Israel. But this is not all: we must look for redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ. Though Simeon was just and devout, redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ must be his consolation.

26. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28. Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

Simeon had been looking and longing for this blessed time. He had Christ in his heart before, and it was all joy to have him in his arms. What makes Christ welcome to any, but the desire of him? Salvation by Christ is nothing to those who desire anything more, and live for some other end. He commands us to seek salvation, in the first place. The man is undone, who seeks it only in the second.

29. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

This was a lively faith! Happy is the man, who can say, at the hour of death, as the aged Simeon did, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

30. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

The same faith can always speak the same words. "It is the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1, and makes them present to the eye of our mind.

31. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people ;

The Lord has prepared, and designed his salvation for all ; he hath published and offered it for the benefit of all. He offers it to all here present. None need to come short of it. You would think it hard indeed, if God had said, you should have no share in it. Pronounce not this curse against yourselves.

32. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

When Simeon spoke these words, all that lived in this place and country were Gentiles, or heathens, without hope, and without God in the world. What are we now ? We are either still in darkness, or we are light in the Lord. Many plead hard for ignorance, and say, they cannot know, and wilfully shut their eyes against the light.

The salvation of God chiefly belonged to his people Israel, was first offered to them, and through them conveyed to all others. We are only grafts upon their stock. This was glory enough for them. They have lost it now, but it is reserved for them, and they will be recovered to it "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Rom. xi. 15.

33. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

With pious wonder, or partly in the dark. They did not know everything concerning him. More was revealed to Simeon by prophecy than they could know without : nor is it anywhere said, that they had this gift.

34. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel ; and for a sign which shall be spoken against ;

Many would stumble at this stone, yet to many he would be a chief corner stone, elect, precious. 1 Pet. ii. 6. Remember what Christ says: "On whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Matt. xxi. 44. Or, many, though they fall, yet through him shall rise again.

35. (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

Who knows what this piercing, sharp sword means? Let not the most highly-favoured think to escape without trouble, inward or outward, or both. At such times, think of the sword in Mary's soul.

Christ is the revealer of the heart to itself: so long as it is unsearched, and hidden to itself, it is certainly corrupt.

36. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanneel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

37. And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Here is another instance of one devoted to God in great strictness, during a long widowhood, and yet looking farther, namely, for the promised redemption of Israel. Christ alone saves all. "No man cometh unto the Father but by him." John xiv. 6. Think of this, that you may be upon a right foundation. Read and consider the eleventh article of the Church of England—"Of the justification of Man."

We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works, or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the "Homily of Justification."

SECTION IX.

Chap. ii. ver. 39—52.

CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE.

39. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

40. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom : and the grace of God was upon him.

The human nature, even in the blessed Jesus, could do nothing without the grace of God. The same grace can, and must be, all in all in us. Do we fall down upon our knees for it, day by day ?

41. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

42. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem ; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

44. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey ; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

The parents of Jesus seem not to have been prepared to admit the divine character which began so early to show itself in Jesus. Alas ! how slow we are to learn lessons of spiritual instruction !—*Edit.*

46. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

Who would not have wished to have been present at that

time? Who would not have been interested in the questions he put to the doctors, and the answers he returned to the questions which those learned persons put to him! Alas! this however would be but a vain, empty wish, if we do not hear him now speaking to us, in his word, where all is told us that is needful for our salvation.

47. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

48. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

49. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

His parents seem not to have known this: and, probably, this was the first hint which he gave them of his great business in the world.

50. And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

It appears strange to us, that they knew no more of Christ, and his office, than it seems they did. But the meanest Christians now may know more of him than his parents could then, without an immediate revelation, which it does not appear they had.

51. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

The subjection of Christ furnishes an example of obedience to parents. Christ, who knew himself to be the Son of God, did not refuse to be subject to Joseph and Mary: she indeed marked these circumstances, and compared them with those things which the angel told her before Jesus was born.

52. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

So may we increase in wisdom and favour with God, by

the same Spirit which dwelt in him. May the Lord grant that we may be always growing in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

SECTION X.

Chap. iii. ver. 1—14.

THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

1. Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

2. Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

We now take a view of John the Baptist. His ministry is rough, but there is a necessity for us to pass under it. He must prepare the way for Christ, in all flesh, by the preaching of repentance. This is God's order, and cannot be reversed.

3. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

Without repentance there is no remission. Repentance is the necessary preparation for it, but does not procure it. That must be done by Christ; and if John the Baptist does not bring us to Him, we are just where we were in point of forgiveness. We must repent, and we think that enough. But sin is not easily pardoned. John can say, *repent*: but he cannot say, *thy sins are forgiven*.

But what is repentance? A sense of the evil that is in us,—concern for it, and a will to be delivered from it. What will man be for ever, if he does not seek after it? Do

not mistake. Every one of us. You yourselves. Do not blindly put all off to others.

4. As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

This is the grand, solemn opening of the New Testament. He comes! He comes! The desire of all nations comes! Be ready. He has his time of coming to our hearts, and of taking up his abode there. But never, till these words first sound into our ears, and put us upon making the way smooth for him.

5. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;

Every hindrance to Christ's coming in us must be removed; especially, that greater one of an opposing will. Not that we can do even this without help: and much less, cleanse ourselves wholly before his coming. That is his work; and whenever he comes, he will find enough to do in us.

6. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

God's salvation comes to us by Christ. What, shall all flesh see the salvation of God? Yes, all. So is the will of God. And yet how many refuse to see? Think whether seeing the salvation of God is not hungering and thirsting after the salvation of God, receiving it gladly, looking for your great comfort from it, and living worthily of so great a mercy.

7. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

He meant, they were not warned. He had reason to believe that they came to his baptism in hypocrisy, and would not take the only method to escape the wrath to come, by repenting.

8. Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Nothing else but the fruits of repentance can prove it to be true and genuine. Repentance for sin, and continuance in it, is impossible. But men are very ingenious at deceiving themselves. They know that they have cause enough to repent, but this is hard. It is neither more nor less than saying, I have been blind, and foolish, and a rebel to God, all my life. What then, in these circumstances, do they do to keep their consciences quiet? They *pretend* to repent.

“Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.” This was very galling to the Jews, who made themselves sure of God’s favour, because they were in covenant with him. But John the Baptist was not sent to flatter them. Let us consider ourselves. Does not his plain speaking hit *us*? Will our baptism, and Christian name, avail us anything without their proper fruits, namely, praying hearts, tender consciences, and strict, christian lives?

“God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” These stones were the Gentiles. Can we all say, that God has raised us up out of our hardened, natural state, to be true spiritual children of Abraham, and heirs of his faith? What would John say, if he was here?

9. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Think betimes, before God lets the axe fall. What a dreadful stroke it will be, if it cuts us down for the fire! Let us examine ourselves, whether we are in a fruit-bearing state, from a root of faith, and as branches of the true vine.

10. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?

Saying this sincerely, is saying something. Have any of us ever said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? We may know by this, whether we are yet come to conversion or not.

11. He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

Christ does not mean that it is unlawful for any man to have two coats; but that when we have enough and to spare, we must not see others want.

12. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?

13. And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

14. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

Let every one who hears this, consider carefully, what sins and temptations he is more particularly exposed to, by his calling, and way of life.

SECTION XI.

Chap. iii. ver. 15—22.

JOHN'S TESTIMONY OF CHRIST.

15. And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;

16. John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

With the Holy Ghost, as with fire; to purify and cleanse us,—to burn and consume all our impurities, whether they be open or secret. John the Baptist cannot do this for us. He has done his office, when he has put us in Christ's hands for this baptism. And for this we must pray, if ever we would be saved by him.

17. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

Christ will by the Holy Spirit purge the floor of the heart now. O that we might say, Amen, to this! For it must be done, and he alone can do it. Christ will purge the floor of the whole world, at the day of judgment; when he will gather the wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. God grant that we may consider, without delay, what we are; whether we are the wheat, or the chaff; fit to be gathered into Christ's garner, or fuel for hell.

18. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.

19. But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done,

20. Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

21. Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

Christ was not baptized for himself, he did not need it. But he was baptized to recommend it to us, and to confirm this ordinance by his example. "And praying, the heaven was opened:" hence we may learn what opens the heavens.

22. And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

May we not hence presume that the Holy Ghost descended upon Christ for the whole human nature, and that he is also present in our baptism?

God is well pleased with us in him, and for his sake, whenever we are joined to him by a living faith. It is the great grace, blessed truth, and peculiar benefit of the gospel, that God sees us in Christ, for our eternal justification. But remember, that every man who hath this hope in him, “purifieth himself even as he is pure.” 1 John iii. 3. May the Lord bestow upon us the faith which worketh by love, keepeth the commandments, and maketh us new creatures.

SECTION XII.

Chap. iii. ver. 23—38.

THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST.

23. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,

24. Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph,

25. Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Nagge,

26. Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Juda,

27. Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri,

28. Which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er,

29. Which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi,

30. Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim,

31. Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David,

32. Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson,

33. Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aran, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda,

34. Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor.

35. Which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala,

36. Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Alphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech,

37. Which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan,

38. Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

This genealogy of our blessed Saviour is traced up by St. Luke, from Joseph the husband of the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, through her family to Adam. And hence we deduce, that Christ was the seed of the woman, which was promised to bruise the head of the serpent. This catalogue of names may suggest to the pious reader many admonitory thoughts. Many of them were, doubtless, great men in their day and generation, yet their names are now the only records which we have of their existence. Those who have particular notices in the Bible, are rendered remarkable, either on account of the blots which stain their memory, or the power of their piety and faith in God.—*Edit.*

We gather thus much from their names, as the progenitors of the Messiah, that the life of man is chiefly to be regarded as affording him an opportunity to glorify God, by devoting himself to the spiritual benefit of his fellow-creatures; and by performing the work of his generation all the days of his vanity upon the earth. Whatever any one, who professes the faith of the gospel, does with an intention to glorify God, and in accordance with his holy will, must be valuable when human life closes upon him. The obedience of the life, and the devotion of the heart, to God, must not however be made the foundation of our hope of mercy from him. There is no other foundation for a sinner's hope than Jesus Christ, whose precious blood cleanses from all sin. But the fruits of the Spirit must be produced, and the works of the flesh be mortified, that the power of sin may be destroyed in those that believe in Jesus Christ. Let us inquire whether or not we are fulfilling the great duties of life, by dying unto sin, and living unto righteousness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Edit.*

SECTION XIII.

Chap. iv. ver. 1—13.

THE TEMPTATION AND FASTING OF CHRIST.

1. And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

Our trials, whether common or extraordinary, outward or inward, of shorter or longer continuance, are likewise from the hand of God. These are ordained solely for our good; and the same spirit which brings us into them, is with us in them. Let us hold fast this belief, and we shall certainly be held up, and in the end be delivered.

2. Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterwards hungered.

3. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

4. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

The devil suited his first temptation to Christ's condition at that time: and so he deals with us. He has not forgotten his art, and is always cunning enough to spy out our weak side. Let us not forget the lesson here taught us. When Satan sets upon a poor man with this suggestion,—“steal,” or “fret against God:”—no, says the honest, faithful, poor man; if I keep close to God, I am sure of needful support; and whatever happens, I will never advise with the devil, how to obtain a supply of my wants.

5. And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it.

7. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

8. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Observe, in the first place, what is commanded, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.” This thou shalt and must do, in public and private, with the bent of thy heart; and without this, whatever thou dost, thou art nothing in his sight. Observe, in the second place, what is forbidden: Thou shalt not worship anything else; nothing besides, or together with, God, but him only: not an idol, nor an image; not the world, nor the creature. And let us take notice that whatever has our hearts, is our God, and nothing else is worshipped there. This is the case whatever the lips say.

9. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

10. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee :

11. And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

12. And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

That is, thou shalt not distrust his fatherly care over thee, by requiring any extraordinary proof of it.

13. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

We have a watchful enemy who never leaves us long ; and we have need to be always upon our guard. If we are, our comfort is, that God never departs from us. But there is no watch kept without continual prayer. What are we doing ?

Christ, who came to work out a perfect righteousness for us, and set an example of perfect obedience, must be tried to the uttermost ; and therefore he has the devil, with all his power and malice, let loose upon him. Trials are the high road to perfection ; and none of his servants must think to escape without them. They are here instructed how to stand forth, namely, by faith, in the power and word of God. If we have the grace given us to say in all temptations, "Thus, and thus, it is written," nothing can hurt us—if we have a will and a power to stand, God will not suffer us to fall.

SECTION XIV.

Chap. iv. ver. 14—30.

THE PEOPLE OF NAZARETH ADMIRE HIS WORDS.

14. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee : and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

15. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

Christ is glorified of us, when we receive him into our hearts.

16. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up : and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

Let us be all attention, as if he were now among us, and standing up to read. He is, indeed, always present, by the power of his Spirit, at the reading of his Word, if we are with him in prayer, faith, and affection, and do not harden ourselves against it. For the love of God, let us hear him.

17. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

It might be the lesson for the day : or, he turned to it, as a most remarkable prophecy of himself,—of his office, and the great design of his coming. Lay it up in your hearts from this moment.

18. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

The true minister of Christ may say this, that the Holy Spirit is upon him, according to his measure. But he must be upon you, if ever you profit by the reading of the scripture.

18. Because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor : he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach de-

liverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

The gospel which Christ preaches to the poor, is glad tidings of mercy, and peace from God:—remission of sins, —a new state of sonship in Christ, and through him a right to heaven.

Christ and his ministers are sent to preach the gospel to the poor: the poor in spirit, who are convinced of sin, humbled for it, and who know themselves to be undone by it. These are the persons whom the world pities and calls fools. Are we the men and women? We may assure ourselves that none but such can be better for his preaching.

The broken-hearted whom Christ is sent to heal are those who are sensible of their danger and misery in sin: and they only can be healed. They are here, moreover, given to understand that they cannot heal themselves: they must come to Christ for healing.

Those captives to whom Christ is sent to preach deliverance, are not in the dungeon of a prison, but in a far worse place: they are held fast by the chains of Satan, and bound hand and foot in sin, as all are, till Christ sets them free.

Men are stone blind, however wise in other respects, till they see themselves in the light of God's truth, perishing sinners. When any have made this discovery, Christ preaches to them the recovery of sight.

Jesus preaches liberty to them that are bruised with a sense of their sins, and who are pressed down as under some great weight. Faith in Christ, as the easer of all our burdens, brings our liberty.

May the Lord grant that this may be the acceptable year of the Lord to every one of us; a blessed year indeed. It will be so, if it comes to us with the glad tidings of the gospel of peace,—healing and deliverance, recovering of sight, and spiritual liberty and acceptance with God through Christ.

20. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

So in substance it is fulfilled in our ears. We have now heard the whole matter; the end of Christ's coming, and who are fit for him, as plainly as they did; and perhaps, as they did, we may wonder at these gracious words. But, that they are fulfilled in our ears, is nothing, unless all be fulfilled in the heart. It was not in them. Let us mark what follows, and be in fear for ourselves.

22. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

23. And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

24. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

25. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;

26. But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

27. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisens the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

Christ, who knew what was in man, knew what entertainment they would give him and his doctrine: and that, very few excepted, they would find out some pretence for cavilling at him, and lose all the benefit of his preaching. Let us take heed that it be not so with us, the generality, at all times, go without their remedy.

28. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath.

This is a certain effect of the word, where it does not

speed its errand. If men are not won by the preaching of it, they will, of course, hate the preacher. Nay, verily, but their wrath is against God, whose word it is. O what a depth of wickedness there is in the hearts and souls of all unconverted men!

29. And (they) rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

30. But he passing through the midst of them went his way.

Thus Christ easily delivered himself from the malice and power of his enemies, without lessening his affection towards the people who sat in darkness and the shadow of death.—*Edit.*

SECTION XV.

Chap. iv. ver. 31—44.

CHRIST PERFORMS MIRACLES.

31. And (Jesus) came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.

32. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

They clearly perceived that there was something very extraordinary in him, but notwithstanding that, they were not generally converted.

33. And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice,

34. Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.

Some, perhaps, may think that none but a devil could say to Christ, "What have I to do with thee?" But every one says it in effect, who puts him off from time to time with excuses.

35. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.

36. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

In every miracle of which you read, keep these things constantly in mind; that it is a proof of Christ's power and will to help us, as he did others; that he alone can help us; and that our healing and cleansing is by as great a miracle as any of which we read. What can it signify to us to hear of his cures, if we do not come to him for our own? But when men attempt to come to Christ directly, naked, helpless, and undone, it is a trying time with the soul.

37. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

The report of the miracles and doctrine of Christ does not always lead men to repentance and faith in him.—*Edit.*

38. And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.

39. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

It is not said, "she arose, and ministered to them," without a good reason. Healing by Christ is followed by ministering to him, and to all who serve him.

40. Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

41. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.

Jesus suffered not the devils to speak, because he knew that an ill use would be made of the circumstance. The

people might have said, as, indeed, the Pharisees did say, he is in league with the devils.

42. And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place : and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.

43. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also : for therefore am I sent.

44. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

He was a common good, and must be everywhere : he is not less so now, but even more. He has a work to do in us, and he is ready to enter upon it. He is alike present everywhere ; and, to our comfort, will never depart from us, if we are but willing to keep him.

The kingdom of God, is his kingdom of grace here, and of glory hereafter. One is the entrance into, and beginning of the other. The state is the same ; only it is perfected in heaven ; and if we are not in this kingdom before we die, we are lost to it for ever. Lord, open our eyes, and take us into thyself, that thou mayest receive us into thine everlasting kingdom in heaven.

SECTION XVI.

Chap. v. ver. 1—11.

THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

1. And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

2. And saw two ships standing by the lake : but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

When the people pressed upon Christ to hear the word of God, he was not offended at their rudeness : indeed they could not please him more. O that we were as desirous and eager to hear it ! Remember it is the word of God, which they would hear. It comes from God, and leads to

God. What else can so much concern us? And what are we, if we do not read, and apply it? We are most certainly unconverted and unbelieving persons. Every soul is in a starving condition, which does not hunger after this food: I do not mean that the word of God of itself is the life of our souls, but as it sends us to Christ.

3. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

Christ taught them according to their desire, and he is never wanting to ours. We must, however, keep in mind, that he can do us no good, without our desires are to him. He not only taught them, but did more than they expected. He provided for their future instruction, by sending out his disciples. And he still provides for the instruction of all, by calling others to help with him, in the work of man's salvation.

4. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

By the ready obedience of Peter we may know, that Christ had already taken some hold of him. So every believer says, Master, at thy word, I will hope against hope, do anything, and everything.

6. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

The inclosure of so many fishes gives encouragement to us to proceed at the bidding of Christ. Our work under him will as certainly prosper as that of the disciples.

7. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

Peter felt himself unworthy of so great a favour, unworthy to stand before Jesus, and dreading his presence. He was, what he said, a sinful man. This circumstance did not hinder him from being called. Christ had no choice but such: and some say, the apostles were not less sinners than others, but greater. However that is, fear not, whosoever thou art. Christ has mercy for thee; and can change thee into another man, as he did them.

9. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

10. And so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

Peter is informed that he should catch more men by the preaching of the gospel, than he had caught fishes in the net. How many thousands, or millions Peter has, by his preaching and writings caught, God only knows. Has the gospel-net caught us? Men may be in it by baptism, and attention to the ordinances of divine worship. But of what kind are we? for we are told that the net has in it bad, as well as good.

11. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Every one must forsake all, who will follow Christ. He need not forsake his calling in life; but he must forsake everything, in will and affection, so as clearly to give Christ the preference. Lord, increase our faith.

SECTION XVII.

Chap. v. ver. 12—27.

THE LEPER, AND THE SICK MAN HEALED.

12. And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold

a man full of leprosy; who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

The leprosy was a loathsome distemper in Judæa, and incurable by human means. It is a lively picture of our defilement by means of sin, and our loathsomeness in the sight of God. And the cure is recorded that we might know where to go for ours. The leper fell on his face before Jesus: fall on thy knees, O 'sinner, and beseech him, as for thy life, to take away thy sin. He can do it, and none else is able. And he will do it, whenever he sees thee humbled at his feet, but not before.

13. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

When Christ says, I will, be thou clean, to us, it is our cleansing. Not our own repentance, or works. The leper came to him, and fell down before him, as we must; but that did not make him clean. The mercy of God, spoken by Christ, does that for all.

14. And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

Here Christ showed a becoming regard to a legal appointment; and that the priests, seeing the miracle, might, if they pleased, believe in him. God does not, in any case, leave himself without witness in the hearts of men.

15. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

In consequence of the fame of the miracles of Christ at this time, great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed of their infirmities. It must be repeated, again and again, that this was the end of Christ's miracles to us, as well as to them: and that hearing of his miracles, or even believing them, can signify nothing to us, if it does not bring every one of us to him for healing. And we

must be brought with a true knowledge of ourselves, and our distempers; for otherwise, we only come to him in hypocrisy.

16. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

He prayed for himself and us, that we might learn by his example to pray for ourselves: let us find time, and retire for that purpose. This we should do, if we knew our work, and our need of support, as Christ did.

17. And it came to pass, on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judæa, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

This full manifestation of the miraculous power of Christ to heal diseases, was made under the immediate eye of the most learned assembly which could be convened. The means of conviction that Jesus was the Christ were abundant, but alas! when men are in love with the world, no evidence will make a lasting impression on their hearts.—*Edit.*

18. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.

19. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

20. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

This additional mercy was probably more than the paralytic, or his friends, expected. They seem to have thought of nothing but a bodily cure. But Jesus knew the man's faith, and sent him away whole, in soul and body. And herein he teaches us, 1st, That sin is at the root of our bodily disorders, and that they should put us upon considering how the case stands with our souls: 2ndly, We are taught what is the greatest benefit in Christ's account,

and for what we should come to him, namely, remission of sins.

21. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

22. But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?

23. Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

24. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house.

25. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God,

26. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.

Let us not only wonder at the miracles of Jesus, but let us adore the Saviour. Let us not only adore him, but let us love and serve him all our days; that we may be fitted to live with him in heaven.—*Edit.*

SECTION XVIII.

Chap. v. ver. 27—39.

CHRIST REPROVES THE PHARISEES.

27. And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom, and he said unto him, Follow me.

28. And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

This was a greater miracle than the cure of the leprosy, or the palsy. A publican, or tax-gatherer, had a gainful, and, for the most part, a wicked trade. Think what a change was wrought in Matthew, to make him leave all, and follow Christ. Those who know their hearts and want to have them changed, find it to be a difficult work. But the

soul which is possessed of faith looks to Christ, and says, He who changed Matthew, can change me. So we should apply every part of the word of God: this is the way to get life from the scriptures.

29. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.

Matthew made this feast for joy of his conversion. Oh! what did he feel in his heart, when he found the world turned out of it, and Christ come in its room!

30. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?

They blame both the disciples and the Saviour; "why do ye, and your master?" They spake to the disciples, but their spite was against Christ. He knew this, and therefore answered for himself.

31. And Jesus answering, said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician: but they that are sick.

They who think themselves whole will never go to Christ, though they have otherwise never so much need of him. To our comfort, the great physician is with those that are sick, even unto the end of the world.

32. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

This is as much as if he had said, I came not so much to call you, self-righteous Pharisees, because I know you will not be called. But I came to call sinners, that is, all; unless there ever was a man upon earth who was not a sinner. Think what you are, hear your call, and know you have a gracious Saviour ready to receive you. But do not come to him with a deceitful tongue, and say, God be merciful to me a sinner, when you do not think so in your hearts.

33. And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?

34. And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them ?

35. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

Our Lord does not pass any censure upon fasting in general, but by pleading the exception in favour of his disciples, he rather establishes the rule.—*Edit.*

36. And he spake also a parable unto them : No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old : if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new, agreeth not with the old.

37. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles ; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

38. But new wine must be put into new bottles ; and both are preserved.

39. No man also having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new : for he saith, The old is better.

On the subject of fasting as here treated of by Jesus, we may observe: 1st. That though Christ does not say that fasting is a necessary duty for all men, at all times ; yet he supposes there is a time for it, which ought not to be overlooked. 2ndly. That in things not absolutely necessary, however profitable, regard must be had to what the weaker sort are able to bear. 3rdly. That in the matters of repentance and turning to God, there is no such allowance. Here in conversion, the call is to all, at all times ; and the least delay is at the hazard of our souls.

SECTION XIX.

Chap. vi. ver. 1—11.

THE RULE OF THE SABBATH.

1. And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first,

that he went through the corn fields : and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.

2. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days ?

3. And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him :

4. How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him, which it is not lawful to eat, but for the priests alone ?

The account to which Jesus alludes is found in 1 Sam. xxi. 1—6. They considered David's character as a prophet unblamable, though he transgressed a ritual observance ; and as they could not impugn Christ's authority as a prophet, they ought not to have found fault with him.—*Edit.*

5. And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Christ, as Lord of the sabbath, had more especially power to dispense with the strict observation of the sabbath. Every man has, indeed, a power to dispense with the observation of the day on occasions when there is a necessity : but then let the necessity be evident.

6. And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught : and there was a man whose right hand was withered.

This man presents to us a picture of our condition. Let us keep this man constantly in mind. Let us bring all home to ourselves, as we go along in our reading. Not any one of us need fear to say this to his soul : I am that helpless man, and must have healing from Christ.

7. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day : that they might find an accusation against him.

8. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.

9. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing, Is it lawful on the sabbath-days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?

Doing good on the sabbath day to the bodies and souls of men, is not a profanation, but a suitable employment of the day. And observe, that when men forbear to do the good they might, and ought to do, on that day, or indeed on any other day, they, in Christ's account, do evil: for not to save life, is to destroy it. Oh! what a black scene of omission will one day be opened to us.

10. And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

St. Mark says, that Jesus looked round with anger and deep concern for the hardness of their hearts. Lord, grant that we may be proof against his piercing eye. At the command of Christ, the man stretched forth his hand; nothing else is wanting to *our* cure, but doing what we are bidden, as he did, that is, coming to Christ, helpless, in faith, and obedience to his command.

11. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

They were filled with madness, because Christ broke the sabbath, as they thought. This is common at all times. If men are not converted by the word, they have something ill to say of the preacher, and would fain be doing mischief. If Christ could not escape censure, bear thy lot.

In the beginning of this chapter, Christ teaches us that the sabbath may give way to necessity. Great strictness in trifles, is not a true keeping of the sabbath-day; but the keeping our thoughts close to God and spiritual things, and making it a day of preparation for the heavenly rest. If we have our eye upon this point, we shall know, in all cases, what we ought to do: we shall be careful to turn it wholly to its proper use: and plead no excuses for neglecting the proper business of it, or for spending any part

of it idly, or unprofitably. Here is no allowance for letting our thoughts run upon worldly concerns,—for needlessly going abroad, or for pastimes,—no, nor for spending the sabbath merely in a sauntering, dozing, thoughtless way. Though our bodies are at rest upon that day, our souls must be fully employed with God. Remember, therefore, to keep holy the sabbath-day. And if you would find out your sin, ask yourselves if you ever kept one such sabbath-day in your whole lives.

SECTION XX.

Chap. vi. ver. 12—26.

12. And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Before he chose his twelve apostles, we may be assured he prayed for a blessing on his disciples, and on their labours, and upon all succeeding labourers. His prayer reaches to the end of the world: you and I may have the benefit of it, if we please.

13. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles:

14. Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,

15. Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon called Zelotes,

16. And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

These names are in the book of life, except that of Judas: if one out of the twelve first disciples of Jesus proved a traitor to his Lord, let us fear for ourselves, lest we come short of the glory of God.—*Edit.*

17. And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out

of all Judæa and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases;

The end of our reading and hearing is, that we may come to Christ to be healed by him. If we do not come to Christ for this end, all is lost labour with us. The healing virtue is not in the word.

18. And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.

Have we no spiritual malady which needs healing? Have we no work for Christ? Have we no unclean spirits, no pride, no anger, no malice, no envy? So long as any of these tempers prevail in us, we are in a worse case than they were.

19. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

The virtue of Christ is not lost. If he was present here, we should all be anxious to touch him for the healing of our bodies. But we do not feel for our souls, although they are sick of a deadly distemper, and he is at hand to help us.

20. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

Ye, my disciples, who have left all to follow me. With respect to others, the contented poor, knowing their lot to be God's choice for them, and that they themselves are unworthy of a better, they are humble in their poverty.

21. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.

They are blessed who hunger for what they ought—Christ and his salvation. The meaning of all this is spiritual; for all that hunger after the goods of the world, are not filled; on the other hand, they remain unsatisfied.

21. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

He that goeth forth to God in the exercises of repentance and contrition for sin, shall return to the company of the

children of God with joy. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. 2ndly, Blessed are they that mourn for sin; and therefore set themselves against it. "They shall laugh," for joy of their redemption by Christ. In this world, for the most part; but most certainly, hereafter.

22. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake,

23. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

Calumny, hatred, and persecution, must be looked for, patiently endured, and rejoiced in, by the true followers of Christ, as the mark of their adoption. The world is always the same, and always at deadly war with the servants of God.

24. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.

Woe unto them that are rich without God: who either are rich, or would be so, and desire no better portion. Their doom is, that they shall have no better: and with respect to the most, not even that. Both rich and poor may be blessed in God's way. He looks with complacency upon an humble, contrite heart, wherever he finds it, and on nothing else, in rich or poor.

25. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger.

Those who are full of the world, and themselves, and feel no want of Christ, shall hunger, without being satisfied.

25. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

Those who go on, now, fearless and unconcerned, shall mourn and weep for ever.

26. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Let all such know, that some way or other, they are not true to Christ, in acting or speaking up for him.

SECTION XXI.

Chap. vi. ver. 27—39.

ON LOVING ENEMIES.

27. But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you.

28. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

When a Christian does this from the heart, it is heaven in the heart! But it will cost many a prayer. Alas! we do not, we cannot, till we are born again of the Holy Spirit. Then we can *bear* this hard saying.

29. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke, forbid not to take thy coat also.

When a Christian is smitten on the one cheek, let him rather turn the other, than smite again, or entertain any thoughts of revenge. Suffer one injury after another, for the sake of peace. Let a Christian part with his patience, and then see what he has got by keeping his coat, and cloke. Those who are fools, in obedience to the commands of God, are not common.

30. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

Give to him who asketh thee, what he wants, and what thou hast to give. “And of him that taketh away thy goods,” not by fraud, or force, but by borrowing, “ask them not again,” to his hurt. For then, thy heart was not in thy kindness. Think of Christ, before you sue. But, take notice, that the words come home likewise to the bor-

power. If one man must lend cheerfully, another must be as ready to repay.

31. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

Bear, and forbear. Give, and forgive.

32. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

We think it enough to be as good as our neighbours: and we may be so, and yet not be Christians.

35. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

In cases, where nothing is to be hoped for, lend: and let not this hinder us from doing good to our poor neighbour, when it is in our power. The heart says, No, these are hard sayings;—the world cannot bear them. We shall hear what Christ says farther, at the close of the chapter.

36. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Not forbearing to do good, because men are unworthy. Upon this ground, we could neither do good to others, nor receive any ourselves from the hand of God. We may observe, upon the whole, what a strange difference there is between God's thoughts and ours. If we were left to ourselves, we should contradict Christ in everything that is here said. We are his new creatures, when we can think and say as he does.

37. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

We must never judge ill of any one, when there is the

least room to judge, or hope well ; never rashly, and uncharitably, or to gratify pride, or ill temper. We are not, however, here forbidden to think an action evil which is so, or to call it by its proper name : nor are we forbidden to admonish, and reprove one another in love. We shall not be judged when we do not judge : so that this hindrance of God's mercy to us will be taken out of the way,

38. Give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.

The encouragement to liberality is very great : give, and it shall be returned to you. In the Greek it is, “ shall they give,” that is, shall be given ; chiefly, by God.

SECTION XXII.

Chap. vi. ver. 39—49.

ON PRACTISING WHAT WE HEAR.

39. And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind ? shall they not both fall into the ditch ?

Can one blind man teach another ? Every man is blind in divine things, till he is taught of God. Let us all learn of Christ.

40. The disciple is not above his master : but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

If a disciple has man for his teacher, he will only have man's wisdom, at the best. If we take Christ as our master, we shall be perfect, according to him.

41. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye ?

42. Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

We are, in general, very quick-sighted in spying out faults; and, perhaps, officious to have matters set right. But the misfortune is, we mistake the person. It is ourselves.

43. For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

So long as the beam is in our own eye, the tree is corrupt, and no good is to be expected from it. There is no virtue in one man's evil nature, to mend the evil nature of another.

44. For every tree is known by his own fruit: for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.

45. A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

The treasure of the heart; there, there, is the root! If ever we would bring forth fruit to God, or man, let us look that all be sound there. For instance, Christ says, love, bless, and pray for your enemies. But we do not receive this saying, unless we have divine love in the heart. And if we should so far comply with the command as to pray for them, it could only be in hypocrisy.

46. And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Here Christ is at a word with us. Take knowledge of yourselves. What Christ says, has neither been done nor thought of. What then must you do? Repent, that you may be forgiven; and by the virtue of faith, enter upon the way of obedience, here marked out for all. See what foundation you are resting upon. And if it is not the

rock Christ, Christ dying for us, and living in us, hear now what will be the end of all.

47. Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like :

48. He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock : and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it : for it was founded upon a rock.

49. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth ; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.

SECTION XXIII.

Chap. vii. ver. 1—17.

THE CENTURION'S FAITH : AND THE RAISING FROM THE DEAD THE WIDOW'S SON.

1. Now when he had ended all these sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

2. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

The centurion's concern for his servant, was an excellent part of his character.

3. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

Have we not heard of Jesus ? and shall we hear in vain ? The centurion thought himself unworthy to come to Christ himself, and therefore he sent his servant in his place. It is a sign of an humble heart, when we desire others to pray for us.

4. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this.

Let us beseech Christ instantly, for ourselves: as we shall, when we know ourselves, and our want of Jesus. The servants did well, in saying that their master was worthy: but, observe, he said no such thing of himself. Let us have a care how we plead our worthiness before God.

5. For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

6. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof;

Every convinced sinner is ready to make a confession of his unworthiness, and to say, Lord, I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies. This is, indeed, what he wishes to hear us all say.

7. Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

Here is a short prayer, ready to be put into our mouths; and it will always be heard, when it is spoken from the heart.

8. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

He did not doubt but that Christ's word would be followed with an equal effect, as his was when he commanded any of his servants. It is very acceptable to him that we should conceive highly of his power, and readiness to help us. Hear how he commends such a faith.

9. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

We see the high admiration in which our Lord holds true faith.

10. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

May the Lord grant that we may find a recovery from our spiritual sickness in ourselves. Our recovery will come to us by faith in his mercy, and the conversion of our hearts to him.

11. And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain : and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

12. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow : and much people of the city was with her.

13. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

14. And he came and touched the bier ; and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

15. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.

16. And there came a fear on all : and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us ; and, That God hath visited his people.

17. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judæa, and throughout all the region round about.

Here we have a still higher instance of Christ's power. I mean as to our conception : for one thing is as easy to him as another. All he did was for this end, that we might see where our help is, and come to him for it. Are we dead in trespasses and sins, and dead to help in ourselves ? We need not fear : we need not despair. His compassions fail not. He who raised the widow's son from the dead, with a word speaking, can as easily put life and power into us.

SECTION XXIV.

Chap. vii. ver. 18—35.

CHRIST'S TESTIMONY OF JOHN.

18. And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things.

19. And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

Either John sent them for their information and conviction that Jesus was the Christ: or, perhaps, it might be on his own account; which is the more probable, as Christ said, "Go your way and tell John." It was a trying time with John. Herod had bound him fast in prison for his plain speaking; and possibly he might give way to doubts and fears. We none of us know how it will be with us, when we come to be thoroughly tried. They ask Jesus, art thou the so long promised, and expected deliverer?

20. When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

21. And in the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.

22. Then Jesus, answering, said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.

Christ appeals to his miracles as an infallible proof of his being the Messiah; and they are recorded for our belief. But in vain do we believe them, if they do not bring us to him for our own healing and cleansing. It is only by his power in us, that he can be *our* Christ.

23. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

For the meanness of his appearance, or the purity and strictness of his doctrine. We are in most danger of being offended at the latter. We have heard something of it in the last chapter, and it is well if our hearts do not rise at it.

24. And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

25. But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft

raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appavelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.

26. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.

27. This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Christ seems to reprove his hearers for going to John, more out of curiosity than anything else; and takes occasion from thence to tell them who and what he was.

28. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

In God's kingdom of grace under Christ. Every one who is truly in, and of it, has a better knowledge, and greater advantages for holiness, than John, or any one else had, before that kingdom was fully opened. We little think what reason we have to bless God for what we may know, and be, under Christ: and how inexcusable we are in being so ignorant, and being so much less than we might.

29. And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

They owned it to be just and right in God to call them to repentance; and they could praise him for calling them to it, and for granting it to them. Observe, not the Pharisees, and doctors of the law, these were wise and righteous in their own conceits: they rejected or frustrated the counsel of God, by justifying themselves, and thinking they needed no repentance; but the lowest of the people, and the worst of men, were the only persons whom they supposed to be called upon to repent. The way to God is always the same. If you would justify him, or be justified by Christ, you must first hear John Baptist, saying, *Repent.*

30. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

They made light of Christ to their own condemnation.—*Edit.*

31. And the Lord said, Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?

What can sufficiently describe their perverseness, in frustrating all the methods which God has taken for their conversion? Let not this be said of us. Think with what grief and concern Christ spoke these words.

32. They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.

33. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread, nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.

John came in a way of great mortification, and separating himself from all society: and they cast upon him the reproach which they were wont to throw at austere persons.

34. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

This was a grievous calumny. But what will not men say against the truth, when they are resolved not to embrace it? Have you nothing in your hearts against Christ? You certainly have if you do not receive him. They accuse him of being a friend of publicans and sinners. This was true, but it showed their blindness in denying their own sin. God be thanked that we have all such a friend.

35. But wisdom is justified of all her children.

Christ, who is the highest wisdom. All his children, who learn of him in simplicity; and who know him to be so, let others say what they please.

SECTION XXV.

Chap. vii. ver. 36—50.

CHRIST'S FEET ANOINTED BY MARY MAGDALENE.

36. And, one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

37. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

38. And stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

We are not to suppose that this was the first time of her coming to Jesus. She knew the Saviour before, and believed in him: and what she does now is the natural, lively expression of her faith in Jesus, and her love to him.

39. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

She is known to have been so; probably by her life. Observe here the natural working of a dark, proud heart. Simon had no sense of his own corruption, and want of forgiveness, therefore he judged hardly of Christ, and pronounced him to be no prophet, for doing the very thing which showed him to be so, and that for which we all want him. What would have become of us all if he had said, as this self-righteous man would have had him, "Come not near to me, for I am holier than thou."

40. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

Simon did not speak out, but Jesus saw his heart, and

he answered to that. Think of the piercing eye of Christ ; and if you would know yourselves, look where he looks. The Lord may be considered as addressing this to us ; here he opens the heart of God to all. O speak it to our hearts !

41. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors : the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

We need not fear being mistaken in supposing that our debt to God is the five hundred pence. But whether it is five hundred pence, or fifty, we cannot pay either.

42. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most ?

He forgave them, as he does us, frankly and freely ; without any desert, work, or payment of ours. This sounds sweetly in the heart of a convinced sinner. To all others, it is a dead letter.

43. Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

Behold, therefore, the great end and design of the pardoning love of God in Christ. It is, that we may love him for the great love wherewith he loved us. You know in your consciences that you would be the basest of all creatures, if you did not judge, and act thus toward one who had saved your life, or who had forgiven you a great debt. And why, then, should things work just the wrong way with respect to God ? They would not, they could not, if you knew your sin, and the mercy of forgiveness.

44. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet : but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

45. Thou gavest me no kiss : but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46. My head with oil thou didst not anoint : but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

Simon paid Christ the outward civility of asking him to

eat with him; but he had none of that dear love and respect for him in his heart, which this woman, whom he despised, showed in her whole behaviour. May the Lord deliver us from Simon's coldness!

47. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

She therefore loved much, because much was forgiven her. Her love was not first, but her forgiveness; and it followed forgiveness, as a token or proof of it. She could never have done what she did for Christ, without a lively sense of mercy in her heart.

48. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

They are, they are forgiven, to every humble, desiring soul; doubt not of it, whatever this ill-judging Pharisee, or any others, may think or say, or whatever thy own fears may suggest.

49. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

He who came with this joyful message to a lost world, and paid the price of his most precious blood for our forgiveness.

50. And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

Here is the whole of our religion. Faith saves us; Christ says to every one who receives him, go in peace, thy sins are forgiven. Peace with God is the ground of our love to him, and of all holy working. This is a sweet portion of scripture to those who look for redemption through the name of Jesus; and who seek for a full declaration of the manner of it. Christ wrought his miracles of healing on the bodies of particular persons, that he might be believed in as the universal physician, and helper of the soul: and here he shines out in all the glory of his peculiar office, his great work, and his endearing character.

In this section we have a lively representation of the freedom of God's grace in the forgiveness of sinners, and the effect of it, in turning the soul to Christ with the stress of its love. Let us understand this scripture, and we have all saving knowledge. The whole gospel is contained in it. Let us re-peruse it with deep attention.

SECTION XXVI.

Chap. viii. ver. 1—15.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

1. And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God : and the twelve were with him,

Jesus went to preach God's kingdom of grace upon the earth, in which remission of sins is published,—newness of life is required, and strength is offered to do the will of God. We enter into this kingdom *now*, in this short day of our lives, or never.

2. And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

3. And Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

The poverty of Christ was the advantage of these disciples, and they had eyes to see it, though probably they were then called fools for their care of Jesus. He may still be ministered unto in his poor members.

4. And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable :

5. A sower went out to sow his seed : and as he sowed, some fell by the way side ; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

6. And some fell upon a rock ; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

7. And some fell among thorns ; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

8. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

9. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be ?

With this request, Jesus immediately complied. Let us also ask, and it shall be given us. Why do we not understand, but because we do not desire it with all our heart?

10. And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God : but to others in parables ; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

It is given unto us to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, if we choose it. This parable is either a dark saying, or it is heavenly instruction, just as the heart is prepared for it, or not. Though Christ is the expounder, it has not light for those who will not see. May the Lord deliver us from so sore a judgment !

11. Now the parable is this : The seed is the word of God.

12. Those by the way-side are they that hear ; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

13. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy ; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

14. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

The fruit fails in all these cases, not from the fault of the seed, but the ground. Let us seek to the Holy Spirit to make our hearts good.—*Edit.*

15. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

They do not suppose that fruit can be produced all at once : but whatever they have, they aim at more and hold out to the last, in spite of all difficulties.

The parable of the sower is easy, as it is explained by Christ, and needs nothing but application. What is the ground of the heart, good or bad? Is it working to and with God, in honesty and simplicity, and striving with downright simplicity and earnestness to enter into the door of grace, which is opened for all in Christ? Or do we cheat ourselves with a vain show of religion, or an empty form of reading and hearing? It matters not which kind of the three hearers here mentioned we are, if we do not get life and power from Christ, so as to bring forth fruit under him. Everything else will be rejected by God. Examine yourselves. Bring all within you to the touchstone of this parable. It was delivered for this end. Think of it by day and by night, and pray continually against the deceitfulness of your own hearts. Think more especially of the poor man's hindrance. He says, it is hard living, and pleads worldly care as an excuse for the neglect of his great work. Christ knew this as well as he; but nevertheless here is no allowance made for his case. If the word is choked, let it be how it may, the soul will be lost.

SECTION XXVII.

Chap. viii. ver. 16—25.

PARABLE OF THE LIGHTED CANDLE—CHRIST STILLETH THE TEMPEST.

16. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

This is a charge to the apostles, and to all, to let their light shine before men,—to speak what they know, and communicate what is given them to others. Although God helps all, he usually helps one man by another.

17. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest ; neither anything hid, that shall not be made known and come abroad.

Nothing that is profitable should be hid within ourselves. It was given, in part, for this end, that others might have the benefit of it. A gracious word in season from any one of you, may, by God's blessing, save a soul.

18. Take heed therefore how ye hear :

Let us be anxious to learn, with what profit we hear to ourselves ; but not for ourselves only.

18. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given ; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.

He that values, and retains, and improves what he hath bestowed upon him from God, to his own benefit, and that of others, shall have more given him. And whosoever hath not, that is, does not use and improve what he has—which, indeed, is the same thing as if he had it not—"from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." For instance ; you have the parable of the sower, and Christ's interpretation of it, before you ; and you may seem to yourselves and others, to have attained some knowledge by it. But none of us have got anything, and all is lost, if we do not receive it into our hearts.

19. Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.

20. And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

21. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

What greater encouragement can we have for doing the will of God ? We see that we may claim kindred with Christ,

and in what way we must become his brethren. O that we knew how to value so great a privilege! Happy is the hearing which brings us to this! But then we must turn the words the other way; if we do not hear the word of God, and do its commands we do not belong to Christ.

22. Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.

23. But as they sailed he fell asleep; and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy.

24. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.

Many poor sinners, when they think themselves to be lost, cry, "Master, master, we perish," and Christ suffers us to come into this condition, that we may know our weakness, and his power. As Christ rebuked the wind and raging elements, so, O Lord, rebuke our boisterous and unruly passions, for thou canst do this, and turn all within us into meekness.

25. And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.

The disciples thought of nothing but their danger, and therefore Christ says to them, "Where is your faith?" We never know what our faith is, till it comes to be tried. What does Christ here require of us all, but a firm trust in him, though everything seems to be against us? Do we inquire what manner of man is this? The answer is, he is the God-man! Our deliverer, whenever we fly to him with this prayer, Lord, save us.

SECTION XXVIII.

Chap. viii. ver. 26—39.

CHRIST CASTETH OUT A LEGION OF DEVILS.

26. And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.

27. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils a long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.

28. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

29. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

30. And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

31. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

The deep here is the bottomless pit—the eternal prison of these spirits. It seems from hence that it was some relief to them, to be in the bodies of men, or even of animals; and according to St. Mark, v. 10, in one place rather than another. We learn also from hence that the devils are wholly under the power of Christ, and can do nothing without his permission.

32. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

33. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

34. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

35. Then they went out to see what was done ; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind : and they were afraid.

36. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.

37. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them ; for they were taken with great fear : and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

These Gadarenes dreaded the presence of the Saviour, and feared some greater loss: they little thought that the greatest loss that could befall them, would be the departure of Jesus, to return no more. How many, in effect, beseech Christ to depart from them! Even all who do not hear him, and leave their sins.

38. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him :

He could not but cleave to Jesus, in his present mind, and knowing how great a change had happened to him.

38. But Jesus sent him away, saying,

39. Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

And this is recorded, that others hearing it may think of their own case, and look to Christ for great things for themselves.

When we read this account of the man possessed with devils, and think it a pitiable case, let us turn our eyes inward and have pity on ourselves. The devil rules in all unconverted men, and his name is Legion. But know that Christ is at hand to cast him out : and he wrought this miracle on purpose that we might be convinced of his power and will to help us.

SECTION XXIX.

Chap. viii. ver. 40—56.

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER RAISED TO LIFE.

40. And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him : for they were all waiting for him.

What, all *then*, and so few *now* ! and yet he has no blessing for us, if we do not wait and long for him, with the desire and will of our souls. Learn from the two following miracles, how we get help from him. The woman was healed of her issue of blood, and the ruler had his daughter raised to life again ; and why ? because they came to him in faith and longing for his benefits.

41. And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue : and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house :

42. For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him.

We here see, how a penitent and believing sinner sues to Christ ; and how powerful the intercession of such is with the Lord Jesus.—*Edit.*

43. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,

44. Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment : and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd.

45. And Jesus said, Who touched me ? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me ?

Though Jesus asked the question, he knew who touched him, and for what end. But he inquired, that the miracle might be known ; and that we might observe the power of a true faith, and what it springs from, namely, a feeling of our disease.

46. And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me : for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

So virtue will come out from Christ to heal our souls, if it be the will of God.

47. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

She found that she was not hid, and therefore would not : she made a full discovery of all, though it was what her modesty would otherwise have inclined her to conceal.

48. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort : thy faith hath made thee whole ; go in peace.

Daughter, was a healing and kind word, indeed ! Christ has the same comfort for all, who know their want of it above all things, and therefore can have faith to receive it.

49. While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead ; trouble not the Master.

50. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not : believe only, and she shall be made whole.

O ! how often do fearful penitents want to have these words sounded in their ears. But do not mistake. This saying does not belong to the careless, who never saw their danger in sin, and think they believe, only because they are blind.

51. And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.

52. And all wept and bewailed her : but he said, Weep not ; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

Christ speaks of her as only asleep, though she was dead, because he knew that she would presently awake from it.

53. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.

54. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.

55. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.

Christ knew meat to be necessary. He would not, however, work another miracle for the preservation of her life, but left her to the use of ordinary means.

56. And her parents were astonished: and he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

A little time before he bade the demoniac show how great things God had done unto him. Here he gives a contrary charge. The reason of which may be this. It was fit that his miracles should be known in part, and they were wrought for that end. But he would not have them noised abroad too much, lest the Pharisees should apprehend him before the time. When his time came, he offered himself to it; and by his public entry into Jerusalem, as it were, put himself into their hands.

SECTION XXX.

Chap. ix. ver. 1—17.

CHRIST SENDS OUT HIS APOSTLES;—HEROD DESIRES TO SEE HIM.

1. Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.

What Jesus did then by his disciples, for the bodies of men, he is always ready, with his ministers, to do for their souls; and one is the proof and assurance of the other. Let us think where we most want healing, and whose fault it is, if we are not helped.

2. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.

They to whom they were sent could not plead ignorance ; nor can we : the kingdom of God is preached to us. Let us choose, whether we will be his subjects, or those of Satan. These two kingdoms divide the world.

3. And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money ; neither have two coats apiece.

They were not to busy themselves, or spend time in laying in provision for it, but to enter immediately upon their office, and have no care but that of discharging it. They were to depend upon God for a maintenance, to which he here gives them a right.

4. And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.

They were to be content with the entertainment with which they met ; and not to go from house to house for the sake of better.

5. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.

Whosoever *does* not, *will* not. God will have this to lay to the charge of all who refuse his offer of salvation. You are undone, if you do not give up your vain excuses. In token of God's abhorrence and utter rejection of them, for slighting their call, shake off the dust from your feet against them. This is terrible to think of. Take warning. God knows if the apostles were to come now to this place, whether they would not shake off the very dust from their feet.

6. And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere.

Thus they were intent on their work, leaving us an example that we should follow their steps.—*Edit.*

7. Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him :

and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead :

8. And of some, that Elias had appeared ; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.

Some said one thing, and some another, but none hit upon the truth. There was a great deal of vain reasoning, but no faith. “ Here we may learn to detect a common error into which men fall, when they attempt to judge of the doctrines of religion, by the opposite opinions which are afloat in the world. They judge that the Bible must contain the doctrines advanced by one of the extreme parties, when in truth, the opinions though disagreeing with each other, are all opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ.”—*Edit.*

9. And Herod said, John have I beheaded : but who is this, of whom I hear such things ? And he desired to see him.

Herod desired to see Christ ; and when he did, he set him at nought. Great numbers desire to hear of him, in every age, and after all their hearing, they make light of him.

10. And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

We may suppose they told him to this effect : here they received us ; there they did not : here they listened to our preaching ; there they stopped their ears, and would not hear the truth. He knows without their report, how *we* hear.

We shall see presently for what end Christ took them aside privately. He wished to have an opportunity of feeding the multitude by a miracle, where no bread was to be had. Our souls may be compared to that desert place : but Christ has food for them ; and wherever he is, there can be no want of food.

11. And the people, when they knew it, followed him : and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

We here see that the people did not follow Christ in vain ; as indeed, none ever shall. He took effectual care both of their souls and bodies.

12. And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.

Let us take occasion from the observation of St. Luke, that "the day began to wear away," to ask ourselves these questions: Is our day wasting apace upon our hands? and are we still in a starving condition for want of Christ?

13. But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat.

So he still says to his ministers. And he will surely command a blessing, wherever there is a hunger for his spiritual meat.

13. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

The apostles were weak in faith, and did not consider who said, "Give ye them to eat."

14. For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.

15. And they did so, and made them all sit down.

16. Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.

17. And they did eat, and were all filled: and there were taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

This miracle may give encouragement to the poorest to trust in Christ, in all their wants and necessities.—*Edit.*

SECTION XXXI.

Chap. ix. ver. 18—36.

PETER'S CONFESSION, AND CHRIST'S TRANSFIGURATION.

18. And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?

Christ was a pattern of private prayer: and the holier men are, the more they imitate him in this respect. Let this be your test. Those who neither do nor can pray in private, are not Christians. And prayer, is from what the heart feels.

19. They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again.

20. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.

This confession is salvation. But perhaps Peter could not have made it, if Christ had not prayed for him beforehand, as at verse the eighteenth. He does not forget us now he is in heaven. But when did we say to him ourselves, Lord, reveal thyself to my heart?

21. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing;

Among other reasons, Christ gave this command because the strongest proof to the world of his being the Saviour was still to come, namely, his resurrection. And besides, the apostles, as yet, were not fit to preach this truth. As yet they were but half believers, as appears by what follows. It was a great surprise to them to hear of Christ suffering and dying.

22. Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

23. And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Our Lord here teaches, that if any one will be his disciple, he must deny his corrupt self, earthly bent, natural will and wisdom, all which things are wholly against what is here taught us. Such persons must be ready, as Jesus was, to suffer and die for the truth. This lesson was more immediately for the apostles, and they happily learned it of him. But we must not forget that it was said to *all*. All are alike concerned in it, when they are called to suffering and

self-denial. And moreover, all have daily occasion for it in the crosses with which they meet, within doors or without, from God or man. Who, indeed, walks by this rule? though our crosses may be but small, we forget Christ's warning, and never set ourselves to bear them.

24. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

25. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

Think of this whenever you are tempted to sin against your souls, and for what small trifles we often cast them away.

26. For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

Let us think of that time, and of that shame, and then be ashamed of owning Christ, and of standing up for him, if we can. Many men lose heaven for fear of being a bye-word among their neighbours.

27. But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

That is, till they see a specimen of it, namely, its glories in Christ's glorified body, at his transfiguration. Compare 2 Pet. i. 16, 17: "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We shall also have glorified bodies, if we are found worthy to enter into his kingdom. We are plainly told that our bodies, vile as they are, shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body. Phil. iii. 21.

28. And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

29. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.

30. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias ;

31. Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

32. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep : and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.

33. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here : and let us make three tabernacles ; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias : not knowing what he said.

34. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them : and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

35. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son : hear him.

If we would have peace with God, and be happy for ever, we must hear his beloved Son. We are undone, if this saying does not sound with power into our hearts.

36. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

By the command of Christ, they kept it close, till he was risen from the dead. Matt. xvii. 9—12.

SECTION XXXII.

Chap. ix. ver. 37—50.

LUNATIC HEALED—HUMILITY TAUGHT.

37. And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.

38. And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son : for he is mine only child.

39. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out ;

and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him.

40. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.

This generation was perverse, because it was faithless; and so it is in every case, when men are perverse, it is because they are destitute of faith.

41. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? bring thy son hither.

This seems one of the sharpest sayings that ever came from the lips of Christ. Nothing displeases him so much as unbelief, because it totally hinders his work in us. And so long as we are hidden from ourselves, and ignorant of our condition in sin, we never *can* believe.

42. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

Let us never forget Jesus Christ, the great physician of our souls. And let us consider whether or not we are now in his hands for healing.

43. And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples,

44. Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.

However amazed we may be at the mighty power of God, it is to no end if we do not know it in ourselves.

45. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

Nothing could be plainer in itself; and why then did they not understand it? The reason was, because it was cross to their inclinations. See what it is which blinds all. When we are so prejudiced, or have a will, or opinion of

our own, plain teaching and plain words avail nothing. All is hidden from us.

46. Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.

Here was the pride of their hearts. We must take notice, all along, that the apostles' faults are left upon record. They were not ashamed to have it known that they were once like other men. It is a sign that they were humbled and converted: for none else can bear to have their faults told.

47. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him,

What shall we do with the all-seeing eye of Jesus, which pierces every moment into all our hearts like lightning? If we could see what passes in them, but for one day, it would make us for ever ashamed of ourselves.

48. And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

By "this child," the Saviour would have us to understand, one so little in his own eyes, humbling himself at the feet of all, at Christ's word, and for his sake. "He that is least among you," shall be great in God's esteem; and shall be greatly advanced by him.

49. And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followed not with us.

50. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

Let us first take care to be with and for Christ ourselves; and then learn from hence not to be over hasty in condemning others, though they do not altogether agree with us. He often sees good, where we see nothing but evil.

SECTION XXXIII.

Chap. ix. ver. 51—62.

WHO CAN BE CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

51. And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.

To his death! O Jesus, make us sensible of thy love, and thankful for the same!

52. And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

53. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

Here was an old subject of enmity between the Jews and Samaritans; which, alas! to the shame of men, too often strips them of all humanity.

54. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

55. But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

We may by this account learn of what spirit we should be; namely, that we ought not to destroy or hurt any man, because we think him an enemy of Christ.

56. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

57. And it came to pass, that, as they were in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

This is soon said: but more goes to it than we imagine. If we resolve to follow him in good earnest, he will try us.

58. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

59. And he said to another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

He wished to stay till his father's death. This was a plausible pretence for not setting about Christ's work immediately: but the call of Jesus will admit of no delay.

60. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

These persons of whom Christ so speaks were worldlings, and therefore dead. Let us learn to think and speak of ourselves as Christ does.

61. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee: but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

62. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Christ is still at a word with us, and will hear of no delay, or looking back to the world. Christ's plough, like all others, requires a fixed and steady eye. Have these sayings reached thee, O minister?

SECTION XXXIV.

Chap. x. ver. 1—16.

CHRIST SENDETH OUT THE SEVENTY DISCIPLES.

1. After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

Christ was, probably, now on his way to Jerusalem, where he was going for the last time. See chap. ix. 51. So it is now. He first sends his messengers, and then comes himself by his Holy Spirit. Are we looking and praying for this coming?

2. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but

the labourers are few : pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

O how dear are souls to Christ ! Pray, says he, and whatever else you pray for, pray that God would send labourers for *them*. How few *can* pray with acceptance to God ? Certainly not those who do not pray heartily for their own salvation. None but those who have a portion of Christ's spirit.

3. Go your ways : behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

This is Christ's character of mankind ! Are these the creatures of whom God said, " Let us make man in our own image ? " O how fallen ! And they are wolves, more especially to those who tell them what they are, and put them upon the means of getting their nature changed. Here is also an admonition to those whom Christ sends, to go notwithstanding ; and whatever *they* are, to be as lambs among them.

4. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes : and salute no man by the way.

They had not a moment to spare, which they could afford to lose ; and therefore the paying of common civilities was not innocent to *them*. All may learn something from hence : ministers to keep close to their work ; and others to redeem all the time they can, for their souls.

5. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

That is, we pray God, that his peace may come to it.

6. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it : if not, it shall turn to you again.

The son of peace is a person disposed to entertain Christ's minister, and his message. On such an one, the peace which Christ's apostle comes to offer in his name shall rest. The peace which a minister of Christ offers to a house, if

not accepted, he is to take back ; and leave that house, to itself. O wretched house !

7. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give : for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

8. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you :

9. And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

Know your advantage, and bless God for it. They were to say, and under those circumstances only could say, that the kingdom of God, in which he receives men to grace and favour, rules over them, and prepares them for his everlasting kingdom in heaven, by Jesus Christ, was come nigh, or coming. We live when it *is* come, and all is told us. O it is an important question ! Am I in Christ ? Am I of his kingdom, or not ? Think how you can belong to it : you cannot indeed, except by your own choice, and hearty acceptance of it.

10. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,

11. Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you : notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

12. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city

13. Woe unto thee, Chorazin ! woe unto thee, Bethsaida ! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sack-cloth and ashes.

Woe unto all persons, and places, which continue hardened under loud calls to repentance, and under powerful means of grace.

14. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.

15. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.

This was true of the city, either on account of its flourishing condition, or of Christ's presence and preaching. "Shalt be thrust down to hell," to the lowest depths of misery here, and of hell hereafter, for slighting its advantages. Unreformed Christians are more abominable in the sight of God, and will have a heavier doom than others.

16. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

Christ here teaches us, that he sends and speaks by his apostles. When ministers of the gospel say, Repent, and believe the gospel, the words are Christ's, and must be received as coming immediately from his mouth. Despising them is despising God and Christ. Despise Christ! Despise God! Yes; all do, till they hear, and believe; and unbelievers say in the bottom of their hearts, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." May God grant that those who never knew their guilt before, may know it now before it be too late.

SECTION XXXV.

Chap. x. ver. 17—24.

THE RETURN OF THE SEVENTY.

17. And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

What can we not do for ourselves in the virtue of this all-powerful name, when we trust in that name?

18. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

Swift as lightning: Christ saw him fall from his power and dominion in the air, by the preaching of the gospel;

which, and which only, is Satan's destruction in every soul where it is received in truth.

19. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy : and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Christ gave this power to the disciples for themselves, and for the benefit of others : and he still gives it to every one of his disciples for himself.

Nothing shall hurt Christ's ministers, in their eternal interests. Christ knew that they would be tormented, and would suffer in their bodies ; but in his account, we are never hurt in our souls. Think so yourselves, and then you have Christ's knowledge.

20. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you ; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

Let us inquire what is our joy ? Is it to please ourselves, and to have our fill of the world, or to think that we belong to Christ, and are giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure ?

21. In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes : even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Let us deprecate the judgment, that this wisdom should be hid from us : if it be, the wisest must perish in their own. But if they do not see, it is because they will not. And, farther, it is an awakening truth, which is here conveyed to us. There is no such pity in God for the wilfully blind as we imagine. He will be glorified in them that are lost, as well as in them that are saved. Observe, that Christ thanks God for the blindness, and consequent destruction, of those who would not see.

“And hast revealed them unto babes:” to those that know that they have no wisdom of their own in divine things, and who submit to be taught of God, with the sim-

plicity of little children. The wisdom of God never enters into any man till he first turns out his own. Here is comfort for the meanest. In this way, and in this only, all may become wise unto salvation.

22. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

All things are given to Christ, that he may give them to men. The Father alone knows how necessary and how great a blessing Christ is to mankind. And no man knoweth what the Father is in himself, and what he is in his love to us, but the Son: and the Father has revealed this in the holy scriptures, that Christ may reveal it to our hearts by his Spirit.

23. And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see:

Namely, Christ manifested in the flesh, and all the promises of God fulfilled in him. This is our case! Blessed are they who see, and are thankful for Christ, and his gospel.

24. For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them: and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

This blessedness has been reserved for us.—*Edit.*

SECTION XXXVI.

Chap. x. ver. 25—42.

PARABLE OF THE SAMARITAN.

25. And behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

This was a person learned in the law of Moses, and a

teacher of that law, who wanted to make trial of the knowledge of the Saviour.

26. He (*i. e.* Christ) said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27. And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

Christ in effect says to him, If thou dost not, if thou comest short of the full performance, thou shalt die. Thou trustest altogether in thyself, and by thyself thou shalt stand or fall. But why did not Christ preach his own gospel, and say, as St. Paul did, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved?” Because he knew that it would be to no purpose. The lawyer thought he needed nothing; and to all such the preaching of forgiveness of sins, by faith, would be in vain. The method therefore to be taken with him, was first to show him his heart, and then to bring him to a true conviction of his sin.

29. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

He thought he could justify himself. This thought lies close to the hearts of us all, and many are blind enough to say that they are able to justify themselves. The Jews were mistaken with regard to the import of the word neighbour; as they confined its meaning to one of their own nation. The lawyer, we may suppose, was of this mind, and hence he was lamentably deficient in his duty.

30. And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

Probably the lawyer might see his own face in this glass presented to him in the persons of the priest and the Levite.

33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was : and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him upon his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

This Samaritan was the most unlikely person that could be to show kindness to a Jew, because they hated one another upon a religious account.

35. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him ; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

The value of two pence was at that time more than it is now ; and was sufficient to defray the probable expense of his recovery.

36. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves ?

37. And he said, He that shewed mercy on him.

He could not help giving this answer : the parable forced it from him. O Jesus, that we possessed all thy art of teaching !

37. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Thus he teaches him, and every one of us. Help every man in his need, countryman or stranger, friend or foe ; and, if thou canst, look into thine own breast, and find out how thou hast fulfilled thy duty to thy neighbour. But there is something more in the parable. When we read it, let us think who is the good Samaritan to us all in our distressed condition : who pours his oil and wine into our wounds, and takes effectual care for our recovery. We

may now see that Christ preached the gospel upon this occasion, as well as the law.

38. Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

39. And she had a sister named Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

Happy Mary! See what we should do. We should read the scripture daily, as in the presence of Jesus, and look to him for a blessing upon it; and this will be sitting at his feet.

40. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

Martha thought herself well employed, and her sister idle. Christ knew better, and that Martha was losing a precious opportunity for her soul.

41. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.

Care is needful, but it becomes damnable, if it shuts out heavenly-mindedness.

42. But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

One thing is needful, namely, a care for the soul. We all profess to know this, and yet we care for nothing less than for this. "And Mary hath chosen that good part." Does Christ know what is good for us, or not? Where are the babes who give up their own wills to learn of Him? And what should hinder any of us from making a right choice for ourselves, if we please?

"Which shall not be taken from her." Everything else will have an end; but our choice of Christ will make us happy for ever. Lord, open our eyes, before it be too late.

SECTION XXXVII.

Chap. xi. ver. 1—13.

CHRIST TEACHES TO PRAY.

1. And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

It was a sign they had profited under Christ, when they came to him to teach them to pray: we may be sure the request was well-pleasing to Christ. Lord, bring us all to thee with this request in our hearts. Thou hast given us a form, give us a true spirit of prayer.

2. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

“When ye pray” with the understanding, and with hearts disposed to pray thus. But do not let us think we say this deep prayer truly, when we do not. And till we can, let us qualify it with another petition—Lord, make this the prayer of our hearts.

“Our Father,” Father of all mankind by creation and providence; and our Father, and Lord of our hearts, in Jesus Christ. Give us the spirit of adoption.

“Which art in heaven.” The place of thy glory, but, through thy love, our home and inheritance.

“Hallowed be thy name.” Be thou revered, adored, and magnified by us, and all thy creatures, according to thy excellent greatness.

“Thy kingdom come.” Thy kingdom of grace in our souls, and in all the world: and then let thy kingdom of glory come quickly; that happy, happy time, when we shall cease from sin.

“Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.” With the same cheerfulness and love.

3. Give us day by day our daily bread.

For we acknowledge it to be thy daily gift, and that whatever we have comes to us by a continually-repeated act of thy bounty.

4. And forgive us our sins :

For Christ's sake : in whom alone we have forgiveness.

4. For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.

We forgive them their debts when they cannot pay, and their trespasses always. We dare not ask forgiveness upon any other terms.

4. And lead us not into temptation ; but deliver us from evil.

Suffer us not to be overcome by it ; leave us not to ourselves, for then we must fall by every temptation. " But deliver us from evil." From the power and malice of Satan, and from the evil of our own hearts.

5. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves :

6. For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him ?

7. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not : the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed ; I cannot rise and give thee.

8. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

God is always ready to give us what he knows to be good for us, and is not wrought upon or changed by our importunity. But the meaning is, that truth of desire in us, and earnestness in asking, are our fitness to receive. It is not mere want, but want which is felt, which gets relief. Let us learn from this whole passage that we have not that which we think we have, if it has not been obtained by prayer.

9. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Let us ask for our souls, without being weary, and as sure as God is true, it shall be given you. He gives the good things of this world to the evil and unthankful, without our asking; and why not spiritually-good things? Because they would not be a blessing to us without our desire and free choice of them. Let us understand this; and if we would know our state, let us think what we should ask of God in the first place. Let us make our hearts answer to this. Worldly, unconverted men may say the words of a christian prayer, and think they have done some great matter for their souls; but in the bottom of their hearts they cannot pray for anything but for the world.

10. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

11. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

12. Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

This is God's best gift, and most needful to us. Is not this a plain direction as to what we should pray for, above and before all other things? But how can we, if we do not first take a measure of our work, and know it must be done; and then see our miserable weakness, and want of the help of the Holy Spirit?

SECTION XXXVIII.

Chap. xi. ver. 14—28.

CHRIST REBUKES THE PHARISEES.

14. And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake, and the people wondered.

15. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.

Christ must either cast them out with the finger of God, or by the power of the devil. They would not own the former, and therefore said the latter: not thinking how unlikely it was that Satan should destroy himself. What desperate blindness and malice was here! What will not unconverted men say against the truth? And if Christ met with such treatment, what must his servants expect at all times, but to be run down with lies and calumnies?

16. And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.

A stubborn will is always calling for more proof.

17. But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.

18. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.

19. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.

Jesus here intimates that their sons did cast out devils in the name of Christ. Chap. ix. 49; Mark ix. 38.

20. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

21. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace:

Is this our case? Do we allow Satan to keep quiet possession of us?

22. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

Let us not fear, though we are weak in ourselves, and have no power against Satan, the strong man. If we fly to Christ for help, Satan has no strength against us.

23. He that is not with me is against me : and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

The man who is not wholly, in heart and will, to have the devil subdued in him, is against him. There must be no halving with Christ, nor halving between Christ and Satan. As to any good which we do to our souls, we may as well be against him.

24. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest ; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.

25. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.

26. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself ; and they enter in, and dwell there : and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

Satan is always watching for an advantage against us ; and if he enters into us a second time, after being cast out, we are in a much worse condition than ever. Let us think how we have kept our baptism : and let us beware of falling away from our repentance.

27. And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.

28. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

There is but one kind of blessedness, and Christ here tells us what it is. If we turn away from this, the whole world cannot help us to another.

SECTION XXXIX.

Chap. xi. ver. 29—35.

CHRIST PREACHES TO THE PEOPLE.

29. And when the people were gathered thick together, he be-

gan to say, This is an evil generation : they seek a sign ; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.

Christ would grant them no such extraordinary sign as they looked for ; except that of the prophet Jonas, who was a type of Christ rising from the dead, in his restoration from the mouth of the fish, after three days.

30. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.

31. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them : for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon ; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

32. The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it : for they repented at the preaching of Jonas ; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

The words of him, who is greater than Jonas, are here, even here in this book, and they may by his Spirit, become as effectual as if he had spoken them to us in person. And if they are not, here is a heavy charge against us.

33. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

Christ did not hide his light ; and we must not. A Christian does not live for himself.

34. The light of the body is the eye : therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light ; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.

35. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

36. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

The intention is to the soul what the eye is to the body. And in order to our seeing clearly, one must be as free from specks and blemishes as the others. All is dark, or light within us, as we have, or have not a single aim and intention to please God in all we do. This pure, single

intention in the heart is the perfection of knowledge, and a poor man may have it as soon as another.

SECTION XL.

Chap. xi. ver. 37—54.

CHRIST REPROVES THE PHARISEES, &c.

37. And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him : and he went in, and sat down to meat.

38. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.

The Pharisees thought he ought to have washed, according to their customs; which had eaten out the heart of better things, and Christ therefore discountenances it by his practice.

39. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter ; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

This sect pretended to great strictness, but they were sadly corrupt; fair without, and foul within. They did not think so; they did not know so much; but this would not excuse them. Lord, how deceitful is the heart of man! Christ lays the axe there, as we shall see farther in what follows. Let us pray that we may see our own; and let us not ever speak of our good hearts, till Christ has searched them to the bottom.

40. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also ?

Let us not then suppose that he looks with more pleasure upon clean hands, than clean hearts.

41. But rather give alms of such things as ye have ; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

This comes to pass by the blessing and word of God. Not by giving alms, as if their food would not have been clean to them otherwise. The meaning is, giving some part of what was in the dish (*τὰ ἐσθια*) to the poor, was much better than the superstitious washing themselves to make that clean, which was so before.

42. But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

They paid tithe, not only to the utmost of what was due in everything, but of things where it was not certain whether they ought to pay tithe, or not. They however passed over judgment, that is, the pure love of their neighbour; judgment and justice in its whole extent. They ought indeed to be strict and honest, in every the smallest thing: but they ought not to put this in the place of the love of God and their neighbour.

43. Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

Christ knew the pride of their hearts. He knows what we love in ours. Look there, if you would be proof against his eye, for he looks nowhere else.

44. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.

These graves were full of stench and rottenness within, however adorned without. Was this true only of the Pharisees? Let the self-righteous search into his own breast. Thou art the man, if a sense of thy own loathsomeness never brought thee to Christ for cleansing.

45. Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.

Why not? They thought he did it unjustly. This is what we would fain be at, when we say, that we have good

hearts, and do no harm. And thinking so, keeps us from Christ, The world is full of good meanings; but one has said, hell was so too.

46. And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

Christ is still levelling a home-stroke at their hearts. The burden was not touched there. Their outward show was nothing to him.

47. Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.

48. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.

The meaning is, that they were the true children of such fathers, and would soon show it by their deeds; as they did in murdering Christ, and his followers.

49. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute:

50. That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation;

51. From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

They should be answerable for it, on account of the same blood-thirsty disposition; more especially in crucifying Christ.

52. Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

They took away the key of the knowledge of Christ. There may be such false teachers at all times. But as we have the Bible, we have the key in our own hands, and in spite of any man may enter into the way of salvation by him. God grant you may be willing!

53. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things :

54. Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

As all do, more or less, openly, or in their hearts, till he has brought them to accuse themselves.

SECTION XLI.

Chap. xii. ver. 1—12.

THE APOSTLES WARNED.

1. In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hyprocrisy.

Hypocrisy is, where the heart does not agree with the outward appearance. A day is coming, when all such will be unmasked, to their everlasting confusion. We are undone by not looking more into our own hearts ; and so long as they are hidden from us, we cannot take one step towards God. It is also hyprocrisy, to conceal what we know, for fear of man. The four following verses answer to both these kinds of hyprocrisy.

2. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed ; neither hid, that shall not be known.

3. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light ; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.

4. And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

We are Christ's friends, if we hear him. Friends of the blessed Jesus ! Who would not give the world to have this said of him ?

5. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear : Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

The words are plain, yet but little understood, or believed ; and are therefore repeated to strike a terror into us : “ Fear him.”

6. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God ?

7. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore : ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Fear God, and you need not fear anything else. He always has you in his eye, and whatever befalls you, is, by his appointment, for your good.

8. Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God.

9. But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

Even those who fear God in some degree, often fear men more, and are cowards in God's cause. Here is strong warning to them, to consider what they will get by it, in the end.

10. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him : but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

He who speaks against Christ, in his state of humiliation, does not sin so dangerously, by far, as he who blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost. Because without him none can come to faith in Christ, and newness of life ; and therefore speaking against, and rejecting *him*, is sinning against our remedy.

11. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say :

12. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

Many have experienced the truth of this, as all will who

are true to Christ, and trust in his promise. If they do not want courage they shall not want words.

SECTION XLII.

Chap. xii. ver. 13—30.

HE WARNS AGAINST COVETOUSNESS.

13. And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

14. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you ?

15. And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness : for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

That is a worldly spirit, which sets up its rest here, however it may be cloked over with a show of worldly prudence. The happiness of man's life does not consist in outward things of any kind. These are not our life, or the things for which we were made, but the knowledge, fear, and love of God.

16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully ;

This parable is a searching one : and by God's blessing, it may serve to enlighten our minds.

17. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits ?

18. And he said, This will I do ; I will pull down my barns, and build greater ; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

Who would not have thought and done as he did ? Who *may* not, in a proper sense ? Take notice, therefore, that what he did is right, or wrong, according to the bent

of his heart. And if you would know when all is wrong within, hear what he says.

19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

Observe : his covetousness did not consist in this, that he thought he could never have enough. He seems to have been content with what he had, and was a prudent, a very prudent man, according to the wisdom of this world. The mischief was, it was a wisdom *only* for this world ; his heart was shut against another, and he had no thought of anything but of enjoying himself here. We cannot reasonably doubt, but that he had some show of religion, and sometimes said his prayers.

20. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee : then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided ?

Let us think of what kind that happiness is, which a man cannot be sure of retaining, even for one moment ; let us consider whether or not God does not know best who are fools. To whom shall thy goods go, when thy possession of them and the enjoyment of them is gone, and with them thy all for ever ?

21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Who maketh anything his treasure, and gives the strength of his heart to it instead of God.

22. And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat ; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

The apostles were to depend wholly upon God for a maintenance ; others, in the way of their own endeavours, without carking care, or anxiety. “ Take no thought,” means, take no uneasy, distrustful thought ; as if there was no God, or no other world, of which we were to think.

23. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

24. Consider the ravens : for they neither sow nor reap ; which neither have storehouse nor barn ; and God feedeth them : how much more are ye better than the fowls ?

25. And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit ?

26. If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest ?

27. Consider the lilies how they grow : they toil not, they spin not ; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

28. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven ; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith ?

29. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

Strictly speaking, “seek not ye what ye shall eat,” was said only to the disciples. “Neither be ye of doubtful mind,” as to the care of God, in his providence, for you, is said to all.

30. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after : and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

The world seek after all these things, as their treasure. A worldly heart, in God’s account, makes a heathen. If we have a worldly heart, it is of little consequence what we call ourselves, or in what part of the world we live, the estimate of God respecting us remains the same.

SECTION XLIII.

Chap. xii. ver. 31—48.

EXHORTATION TO WATCHFULNESS.

31. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God ; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Seek ye the kingdom of God, in the first place, and as you seek nothing else. Resolve to have your lot in the kingdom of God's grace here, by faith and obedience, that you may be admitted into his everlasting kingdom in heaven. Is it so indeed, now, while we are reading? O Jesus, speak this to our hearts! For if thou art not our portion, whatever we get, we lose all. "Food and raiment" shall be added unto you. Christ engageth for nothing else: nor indeed, for that, to the idle, or the thriftless.

32. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

How good a Father! How precious a gift! And what are we, if we have not wills to receive this kingdom?

33. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

The apostles had left all: and for special reasons, the same would be required of some others, at that time; Acts ii. 45; iv. 34; but not of all, at all times, unless when the poor cannot otherwise be relieved.

34. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

And what then? What if our hearts are in the world? Why, then we perish. We cannot love God.

35. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;

Stand always ready. The Jews wore their garments long, and girt them up, when they were at work, or when they went abroad; hence the propriety of the image.

Never be off your watch, but let your lights be burning. The bridegroom conducted his bride home in the night, and the family were to have the house lighted for his reception.

36. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding: that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

The waiting is to be with a degree of eager expectation.

37. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

See how pleased Christ is with his faithful servants.

38. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

39. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would have come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

40. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

We know not when Christ will come, or the hour of our death. But we do know, that we must be ready for him; because we do not know when he will come; and because it will be a dreadful surprise to us, if we are not.

41. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

Christ signifies in his answer, that it was meant chiefly for them, and other watchmen. But withal it is a lesson of diligence, sobriety, and watchfulness, for all in their christian vocation.

42. And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

43. Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

45. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

46. The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

47. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared

not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

48. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required : and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

The man who knew not his lord's will, shall be beaten with few stripes, if his defect of knowledge was not his own fault : but not the man who might have known, and would not.

SECTION XLIV.

Chap. xii ver. 49—59.

THE DUTY OF BEING ADMONISHED.

49. I am come to send fire on the earth ; and what will I, if it be already kindled ?

The fire of purification by the Holy Ghost : or of division, according to what follows. “And what will I, if it be already kindled ?” For this end Christ came, and for what had he farther to wish ?

50. But I have a baptism to be baptized with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished !

This is the baptism of Christ's death. It was a bloody one ; and yet, for the joy of our salvation, he was in pain till the time came. Will nothing melt our stubborn hearts ?

51. Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth ? I tell you, Nay ; but rather division :

This sounds strange. Is not Christ the prince of peace ? Does he not pronounce the peace-makers blessed ? And does he not charge us to love our enemies ? Yes ; and none

can be his disciples, who are not at peace with all the world. Nevertheless, his coming would cause great divisions in the earth. He came to separate the good from the bad, and make the good bear their testimony against the bad. And the sure effect of this, on the part of the bad, he knew would be quarrels and heart-burnings, hatred and persecution.

52. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

A man's nearest friends will sooner forgive him anything, than his being in earnest in religion, and entering into the true spirit of the gospel.

53. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father: the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

Our Lord's assurance of the enmity which wicked men will cherish against the good, is found true. St. Paul says, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Let us count the cost, and bear the reproach of Christ. *Edit.*

54. And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.

55. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.

56. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

They had, like many now, understanding and natural discernment enough, in anything but what it most concerns them to know.

57. Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

Why do ye not judge the good of peace; and more especially of being at peace with God?

58. When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him ; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.

If any man has a just quarrel against thee, and much more God, attend to the consequences, and make all up without delay. Are you sure God has no quarrel against you ?

59. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

If hell is the prison, the sinner will never pay the last mite. No payment can be made there.

SECTION XLV.

Chap. xiii. ver. 1—9.

PARABLE OF THE FIG-TREE.

1. There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

2. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things ?

They did so think of them, and concluded that Christ would think so too. But he, who knew what was in man, instead of falling into this snare, turned short upon them with a startling admonition, and sent them to their own hearts.

3. I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Christ does not deny that those who perished were sinners ; but only, not therefore, greater sinners than others ;

or perhaps, those who told him. Hence he says to them, and in effect to us, “But except ye repent,” that is, see and feel your guilt in sin, and dread to continue in the practice of sin. Who are the persons who do not repent, we ask, almost, one and all? We ourselves. This may seem hard to those who would be excused from repentance : but what follows is harder : “Ye shall all likewise perish :” —it may be, by some sore judgment in this world ; as the Jews did ; but if not, most certainly, for ever.

4. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem ?

5. I tell you, Nay ; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

This is the end of all impenitent sinners.—*Edit.*

6. He spake also this parable : A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard ; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

Christ spake this parable to convince them and others, of God’s patience, and of their doom, without repentance. O ! come into the light of this parable, and know that God is at a word with us all. The husbandman sought fruit on the fig-tree ; which may teach us, that man was as much made for holiness, in the full exercise of love to God and charity to men, as the fig-tree, or any other tree, to produce its proper fruit. “And found none.” We have none for Christ, till we come, by repentance, to the possession of true faith, and a new nature by the Holy Spirit. A civil, smooth life, from any other root, is not that fruit.

7. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none : cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground ?

How many times three years is it with many of us ? “And behold !” says he, wondering at the strangeness of the matter. And may not God say of us, “What could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done in it ?

“Cut it down.” It is just in God to pronounce this sentence whenever he pleases. He defers it, however, in mercy. If it is abused, his patience will have an end. What is all the wisdom in the world to a feeling of these truths in the heart? “Why cumbereth it the ground?” Every one who does not bring forth fruit unto God, is a burden to the earth.

8. And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it;

9. And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

We may imagine Christ himself thus interceding for us. “Lord, let it alone, this year also.” What, no more! Perhaps not so much as a year. God may have set us a time, and a short one too, though we think nothing of it. What has he not done to bring us into a fruit-bearing state? O that our souls may bear fruit! O that they would indeed, then it will be well!—“And if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” Christ pleads earnestly for us, while there is time and hope. But if his labour is in vain, he has not a word more to say in our behalf. He will give us up to the justice of God, and be the executioner of it himself.

SECTION XLVI.

Chap. xiii. ver. 10—22.

HE HEALETH A DEFORMED WOMAN.

10. And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

11. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.

To see ourselves in this condition, bowed down under a load of sin, and spiritually disabled, makes us fit to experience Christ's healing power. Till then, we only mock him by calling to him for help.

12. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

Jesus saw her misery, and that was enough. He sees ours, and is ready to relieve us the moment we turn to him for it. Jesus called this woman, and has he not a call for every one of us? Does he not speak aloud, "Thou art loosed," in his gospel to all repenting sinners?

13. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

We can then glorify God, when we do it from a sense of our cure: not by the strength of our crooked natures.

14. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.

The law of the sabbath was rightly laid down, but he ought to have known that works of mercy, and works of necessity, are not any breach of the sabbath day.

15. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

Jesus calls him an hypocrite, for blaming what he could not but allow in other cases, and what Christ did with so much better reason.

16. And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?

It may be said, that she would have been no worse if her cure had been put off to another day. But help delayed, is a degree of cruelty, and Christ was for losing no time. Let us think how ready he is to help us,—how much worse

it is to have Satan's bond upon our souls, and what a hazard we run by letting him have power over us one day longer.

17. And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed : and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

I pray God that we may from our own experience ! O that we knew what glorious things he has had to do for us, and in us ! What can it signify to us how many are the better for him, if we are not ? Let us put the question home ? What has Jesus done for me ? Has he taken me out of my old state, and given me a power to become a child of God ? Has he washed me from my sins in his blood, purified my heart by his Spirit, and set me in the way of his commandments ? Has he taught me to pray, and to keep a daily watch over myself ? Have I learned of him to seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, in the first place—to love God and man,—to deny myself and die to the world, to be meek and lowly ?

Have I learned from him patience and resignation ? When he does this for us, we shall have cause to rejoice. Then he hath done glorious things indeed : he hath brought down heaven into our hearts.

18. Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like ? and whereunto shall I resemble it ?

Here Jesus speaks of God's kingdom of grace under himself, as to its spreading and manner of working, in the world, and in every single soul.

19. It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden ; and it grew, and waxed a great tree ; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

The comparison is between the smallness of the seed and the greatness of the plant, which in the East grows to a great height.

20. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God ?

21. It is like the leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

This by degrees turns the whole mass into its own kind and nature. Observe, 1st, That the seed must be sown, and the leaven must be put into our hearts: we have neither ourselves. 2ndly, A christian state is, and must be, a progressive state. We do not attain all at once; but if we have the power and virtue of a seed, or Christ's leaven, in us, we shall always be growing and working on towards perfection.

22. And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

By the mercy of God, we sit under his teaching, and know that he went to Jerusalem to die for us.

SECTION XLVII.

Chap. xiii. ver. 23—35.

CHRIST EXHORTS TO REPENTANCE.

23. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?
And he said unto them,

24. Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

Christ's answer to the question, "Are there few that be saved?" though not direct, implies that there are but few. Let it sink down into our hearts, and let us be in pain for ourselves. Christ bids us to strive earnestly, with deep concern, and with all our might and main, in all manner of ways. And why? Because the gate is strait. If Christ had not told us so, he would have deceived us. Not one soul, however, shall be shut out, that seeks in earnest. But the meaning is, that many would not be made able: many would seek in a wrong way, and think themselves qualified

to enter in, when they are not. Alas! how many? Even all who rest in an outward profession, without that inward change, which Christ came to work in them.

25. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

26. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

What shall *we* say? What *have* we to say? Lord, we have been baptized, we have heard thy word preached; and we have sometimes come to the sacrament. And is this all? Has Christ nothing to do with our hearts?

27. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

As much as if he had said, notwithstanding your name, and outward advantages, you do not belong to me. Have we nothing to do with this? "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." This is the true character of all who are unrenewed in their hearts and natures, and lying under a sentence of guilt and condemnation, whatever they may think of themselves, or however they may appear to men. This is the condition, till sin is opened to them in its root, and brings them, in the exercises of faith and repentance, to Christ for cleansing, and strength to do the will of God.

28. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

Excluded, for not being the true children of Abraham, in faith and obedience.

29. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God shall be preached to the Gentiles,

and many in all parts of the world will believe to the saving of their souls.

30. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

The Gentiles, though last called, shall be first in faith, and in God's favour. "And there are first which shall be last," the Jews, the first in covenant with God, but all unbelievers among them, shall be last, that is, finally rejected.

31. The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.

They thought to terrify him with this, and to make him fly. His answer shows that he knew his danger, and would not be frightened by it from following on his work. He knew too that his danger was more from themselves, than Herod.

32. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

Christ spoke this of Herod as a prophet, and he does not hereby authorize any to speak disrespectfully of princes.

"And the third day I shall be perfected;" that is, within a few days. This he would attain by finishing the work which he came to do, and by his perfect obedience unto death for our redemption. O blessed Jesus! Perfected! Crucified as a malefactor! What an opening is this of thy heart of love! What thanks can we render to thee for thy unspeakable goodness to us?

33. Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

They of Jerusalem had been so notorious for killing them, that it could hardly be the case that a prophet should perish elsewhere: so that he was safe elsewhere, till he came there.

34. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and

stonest them that are sent unto thee ; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not !

This is, indeed, a familiar and lively image of his tender concern, even for that blood-thirsty nation, and especially that generation. How loudly and compassionately does he here call to us ! O why are we not saved ? Why do we perish under so great mercy ? He tells us, “Ye would not.” There is the root of every impenitent sinner’s damnation, namely, a stubborn, opposing will. He died to bring our wills over to God, and make salvation our own choice, but he can do no more for us ; and without this, mercy is at an end for ever.

35. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate : and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The time will come, and probably is not far off, when the Jews, who have been preserved by a continual miracle for that purpose, shall turn to the Lord, with these very words in their mouths.

SECTION XLVIII.

Chap. xiv. ver. 1—14.

CHRIST’S CONDUCT AND TEACHING.

1. And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.

And he had an eye upon them also ; but with a very different design. Their intent was to destroy him : Christ’s intention was to instruct and to save them, by laying open their pride, ignorance, and hypocrisy.

2. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

3. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day ?

4. And they held their peace.

This question of Christ darted conviction into them, all on a sudden. They would not say it was lawful, and durst not say that it was unlawful.

4. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go ;

Christ did this without fear of their censure, or any danger that might come to him by the miracle.

5. And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day ?

Jesus again answered them according to their hearts. His judgment is always in agreement with what we find there. His eye goes directly thither. He does not want to hear us speak, or to see us act, in order to know what we are.

6. And they could not answer him again to these things.

What answer could be given to such plain reasoning ? Nevertheless, it does not appear that they were convinced. It is one thing to be struck dumb with the truth, and another to own it.

7. And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms ; saying unto them,

8. When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room ; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him ;

9. And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place ; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

10. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room ; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher : then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

This is sound advice, suited for all times ; and when it

is followed from the heart, it will render men better fitted to exercise all the charities of life.

It may seem unworthy of Christ, and much beneath his office, as a divine teacher, to prescribe a rule for our outward behaviour. And so it would appear, if we stop at the outside of the parable. That which Christ here teaches, is lowliness of heart. Let us carry that about with us, and we shall always know our place. O what shame will seize us, if the great master of the feast should say to us at last, Thou art a deceived man, thy place is not here !

11. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

All persons, without exception, exalt themselves, till a sense of sin has laid them low. But those who continue to exalt themselves, shall be abased to hell. But he that humbleth himself—as all should do, and will, whenever their eyes are opened—shall be exalted to a place at God's right hand. We can hear these plain words a hundred times over, without ever looking for any pride in our hearts, or thinking of the consequence.

12. Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner, or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours ; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.

13. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind :

14. And thou shalt be blessed ; for they cannot recompense thee : for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Christ gives a lesson to the entertainer, and bids us look to eternity, as the grand recompence for all the benefits we confer on our fellow men. Let us carry out the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and we shall then say with David, "My goodness extendeth not to the Lord, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to such as excel in virtue." Compassion to the needy from a sense of our obligation to God for his infinite mercy

to ourselves, will dictate a proper line of conduct toward the poor in our festivities.

SECTION XLIX.

Chap. xiv. ver. 15—24.

PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE SUPPER.

15. And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

16. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many :

None were excepted from this invitation.

17. And sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come ; for all things are now ready.

Are we not invited ? And to what ? To receive the forgiveness of our sins : to be happy in God's favour ; and to be made new creatures in Christ Jesus, in order that we may be fitted for heaven. The invitation to us is, " Come ; for all things are now ready," that is, on God's part. All that sinful, perishing creatures can desire. And God the Father does not mock us. Behold and wonder ! *He* says, " Come." Christ says, " Come." The Holy Spirit says, " Come." O come then, all ye who hear these sayings. Be ye also ready. Think you hear this spoken from heaven.

18. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it : I pray thee have me excused.

Their excuse was worldly business or engagements. We may well suppose that this was singled out as the most common and fatal hindrance of men's salvation. Look to it, for yourselves are at stake, and the world has a strong chain about you.

19. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them : I pray thee have me excused.

He would be excused from salvation ! So the field and the yoke of oxen make men say in their hearts.

20. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

The rest were a little more modest, and *prayed* to be excused. This man thought it a clear case that he had nothing to do at God's supper, and said stoutly, he *could* not come. They all indeed meant, they *would* not.

21. So that servant came, and shewed his lord all these things.

Nothing is hidden from him, though we would fain think so. He knows what is at the bottom of all our excuses.

21. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

See at what the master of the house was angry ! Had they not fairly excused themselves ? O no ! Take warning. Remember that you are to be put into God's balance, and there weighed.

We ! we ! are the miserable objects who are to be brought in : we, sinful dust and ashes, who are every way diseased and helpless. We, by a miracle of mercy, have had, and still have, our call to be healed, and received by God as his friends. We are fit for Christ just as we are ; he wants nothing of us but to have us know what we are.

22. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

There is no forcing men to heaven, for then God would keep none out. But the meaning is, go, everywhere, do everything, try all methods, be very urgent with all sorts of

persons, use a kind of holy violence, to bring them thither. When this is done, heaven will be filled, though we perish.

24. For I say unto you, That none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.

Because they refused to come. No matter for what reason. They shut themselves out of the kingdom of heaven, and excluded they must be for ever.

SECTION L.

Chap. xiv. ver. 25—35.

THE DISCIPLES MUST COUNT THE COST OF RELIGION.

25. And there went great multitudes with him : and he turned, and said unto them,

Christ said words, in which all of us are concerned, even to the end of the world ; and he inculcated a hard lesson indeed.

26. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

Let us not, however, mistake our Lord's words. We are not here required actually to hate any one, and much less father and mother ; but to renounce them as freely as if we hated them, whenever they are an hindrance to our salvation, and would keep us from Christ. Our souls must be dearer to us than all the world, or our own lives.

27. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

We must bear our cross of outward sufferings when it is laid upon us ; and also of inward mortification of all ungodly tempers, which we must of all necessity lay upon ourselves.

28. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it ?

As if he had said, in other things you think beforehand what you are about to do; and what means you have for finishing that which you undertake. Do not think to be my disciples with less forecast. If you would follow me in the road to heaven, there is something to be done which will put you to the trial. And if you are not aware of it, you must necessarily shrink from me.

29. Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,

30. Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

31. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand ?

32. Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

33. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

1st, He must wholly forsake his own natural will and wisdom, his corrupt self, his choices and inclinations, in order to give himself up to the will and wisdom of God. 2ndly, He must wholly give up all dependence upon himself, or the creature, for rest and happiness. 3rdly, He must not so cleave to anything that he has, in heart and affection, as to be unwilling to part with it, when God calls for it. May the Lord help us ! We have great reason to fear that Christ's christianity is not ours.

34. Salt is good : but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned ?

The doctrine of Christ, and his Spirit, are our seasoning. We are dead flesh of ourselves, and must putrify or mortify others, if we have it not, or if we lose it.

35. It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out.

This is a most awful warning to all who claim the benefit of being the disciples of Christ: but especially to the ministers of his holy gospel.

35. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And let him lay to heart that which so deeply concerns him.

SECTION LI.

Chap. xv. ver. 1—10.

PARABLES OF THE LOST SHEEP, AND OF THE PIECE OF MONEY.

1. Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

When lost sinners draw near to Jesus, to hear him, it is an important and precious moment to them. For such he has sweet instruction, and they will find him to be all grace and goodness.

2. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

O what a winning, meek answer does he return to the proud murmurings of these men! Christ was a saint of a different kind from these pretenders to great strictness. They murmured because he received sinners; but blessed be God that sinners have such a friend. Let us know ourselves to be sinners, and he will receive us, and will keep a feast with us, but Pharisaical pride of heart shuts the door against him.

3. And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

A parable is a similitude, or comparison, contrived for the sake of some farther instruction, and contained under the outward cover of it.

4. What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it ?

God has his eye and heart upon all, and this is a marvellous description of his tender concern for all, and every one. Let thy care be for that one which is lost, namely, thy soul: let this be now considered, if we never knew it before. And let us think what it is to be lost to God.

5. And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

As we should, if we had plucked an only child out of the fire. Jesus knows what a lost condition is, though those that are in it do not. Has Christ ever taken us, as it were, on his shoulders? When were we found of Christ? When did we put ourselves in the way where he might find us?

6. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

This he does, as not being able to contain his joy. A man would scarcely do so for the finding a lost sheep: but Christ can, and does, for the recovery of a lost soul. O minister, what is *thy* joy!

7. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

The words are plain; the sinner must repent! And what a call and encouragement has he to it! What an opening is here of the deplorableness of a lost condition! As if heaven were not heaven, so long as men are miserable by continuing in sin.

“More than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance:” that is, no remarkable thorough change of their state: or who have already repented, and are safe in God’s fold. But why over one such than over ninety and nine just persons? For its being unexpected; as our

joy rises higher on the like occasions, in proportion to the grief and concern which went before. The parable of the Prodigal Son, will serve further to explain this.

8. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it ?

9. And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me ; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

10. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

This parable, in addition, is added to the same purpose ; in order to confirm God's gracious intention towards repenting sinners beyond all doubt, and to cause the whole to make a deeper impression upon us.

SECTION LII.

Chap. xv. ver. 11—24.

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

I suppose the parable of the Prodigal Son to relate primarily to the calling of the Gentiles,—the younger brother,—and to their being reconciled to God in one body, with the Jews,—the elder brother. But withal it is a perfect draught of every sinner's progress in error and guilt ;—of the manner of his return to God ;—and of his joyful reception. Every single soul, while wandering from God, is in the Gentile state, and must come to him in the way here marked out for all. At the present time this is that in which we are principally concerned.

11. And he said, A certain man had two sons ;

12. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

This young man would have it so, and was left to his own foolish choice. He wanted to be manager for himself. This was Adam's sin, and we have all more of this independent spirit than we imagine. But woe be to us, when we take ourselves out of God's hands. The father had a portion for him, as God has for us all. See what it will come to when it is in his own keeping.

13. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance in riotous living.

Let us keep our thoughts close to the hidden meaning of the parable, all the way, as we proceed. He departed from God, and quickly wasted his stock. His soul was soon in a starving condition.

14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

This pictures forth a man who is pinched with spiritual poverty, but does not yet turn his eyes to his Father's house; and who tries all ways to relieve himself, in some other method.

15. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And what could *he* do for him in his need? Nothing, but send him to feed swine. The meaning is, we do so by ourselves. When once we are fallen from God, as we all are by nature, we make any shift rather than return to him.

16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

These husks are the world, our lusts, our own wills, called our reason; and with this trash we would fain fill ourselves. "And no man gave unto him." Still there was no food for the poor soul: its hunger was unsatisfied; and now behold it at the last gasp.

17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired

servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger ! .

Mark how a man finds his lost state, and that no sinner ever comes to himself till he does find it. If we would know whether we have come to ourselves, let us observe what follows, and what workings we must have had. Hear his reasonings in this verse. What plenty have I left ! What a wretched condition have I brought myself into ! How much better is that of the meanest person in my father's house ! So the awakened sinner says, *I perish*. This, therefore, is the first step in our repentance, namely, self-knowledge, conviction of sin, and a deep sense of our misery.

18. I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

A purpose in the heart to return to God, is the second step in our repentance : " I will arise and go to my father." Confession of our guilt and miserable blindness, is the third step in repentance : " Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee."

19. And am no more worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants.

This is another qualification of a true penitent. He thinks that he has no right to be treated as a child, in God's family. O that he might be admitted to the meanest place in it !

20. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

This was the last step, and the completion of all that went before. No knowledge, convictions, or purposes, will avail us without this arising, and coming to God, through Jesus Christ. Now see what his father did, and what God will do for all who are come thus far on their way.

When we are resolved to come to God, it is no matter how far off, we are seen and pitied by him. The face of

this man was turned the right way. His father, who only wanted this happy change, saw it, and ran to meet and welcome him, with all possible demonstrations of kindness.

21. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

No work of grace begins till this confession comes from the heart, and from a lively conviction of our miserable estate in sin. It is easy saying, as we are taught, that all are sinners, and so thinking no more of it. But the prodigal son was pinched with a sense of his miserable condition. And so must all be inwardly, before they take up a resolution of coming to Christ, and by him to their heavenly Father.

22. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

What can the best robe be, but Christ's perfect righteousness? "And put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." He is again a child in my family, he shall be owned by me as such, and entitled to all the plenty of it. O our good heavenly Father! Here is not a word of upbraiding for what was past. All is forgotten when the sinner comes to himself, and returns to God the Father, through Jesus Christ, who is the only way to God.

23. And bring hitler the fatted calf, and kill it: and let us eat, and be merry:

Who was sacrificed for us? And what cause have we to rejoice!

24. For this my son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

We are all dead in trespasses and sins, till Christ lives in us; and we are lost to all good, to ourselves, to God, to heaven, and to happiness, till we are found of him.

SECTION LIII.

Chap. xv. ver. 25—32.

PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

In order to understand what remains of this parable, we must call to mind that one great design of it was to show the calling and receiving the Gentiles into covenant with God. The Jews, who were once his only people, had persuaded themselves, by a strange mistake, that they were always to be so, and they could not bear to think that the rest of the world should have this honour with them. We may now see who the elder son is, and what was the ground of their murmuring.

25. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

26. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

He did not know himself. We can hardly think that any one but such self-righteous people, can be displeased with God's superabundant kindness to the worst of sinners.

29. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends;

See here the heart! Let us know our deceitfulness. In the very act of transgressing, he says he never transgressed.

30. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

In his pet he had forgotten that he was his brother.

31. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

Though the elder son was greatly to blame, and betrayed a very bad disposition, his father was not less concerned for him than the other; but speaks to him with great tenderness, to bring him to a better mind.

32. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

The elder had said in scorn, "This thy son," v. 30. The father throws the ill-natured expression back to him, with a gentle rebuke, and says, "This thy brother." If you are an elder brother in the faith of the gospel, despise none. Call to mind your own wanderings, and the bowels of your heavenly Father towards *you*. Remember that you are saved, as a sinner, who is, as yet, only in the way, and may both be tempted and be drawn aside.

This is an instructive, awakening, and most comfortable portion of holy writ. Man needs mercy, and God has all mercy in store for him which he wants. He is ready to be reconciled to us; we need not perish, we may live. But this is only a cold expression of the love and compassion of God. It is far short of the lively representations which we behold in this chapter, which may be well entitled, "God unveiled to mortal eyes." He is here represented as seeking after us with bowels of melting pity. We see him, in this chapter, longing for the hour of our return, and receiving us with transport into his arms, as much as if his own happiness depended upon it, and every lost soul was the loss of a child to him.

This is knocking hard at the door of our hearts; this is stooping low, and bringing the matter home to our senses indeed: and could our extreme danger, in sin, be more feelingly described, than by showing us that all heaven is interested in our recovery, and how great an accession of joy every penitent,—each single penitent,—is to the blessed inhabitants in heaven. O! why then do any perish? If

the truth is here told, and God has such an earnest will for the salvation of all, what should hinder it, why are not all saved? Hear the reason, and ponder it in your hearts. It is because we do not desire it, and no man can be saved against his own choice. We are miserable, only by departing from God, and can only be happy in returning to him. He calls aloud to us to return: he makes us all possible offers of kindness, and tries all ways to work upon our stubborn natures. But if we do not say, "I will arise, and go to my Father:" if our wills do not bring us back to him; the separation still continues, and the misery will cleave to us for ever. Now, therefore, let us attend: O Lord! help us!

SECTION LIV.

Chap. xvi. ver. 1—13.

PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD.

1. And he said also unto his disciples,

He speaks to us, if we are his disciples. And his design is to teach us to draw all our thoughts to one point, to manage our concerns in this life with a view to a better: and when we have chosen the good part, to be as careful and wise to make everything turn to our everlasting advantage, as worldly men are for their own ends.

1. There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

What is this to us, if it does not turn our eyes inward, and put us upon thinking that we are stewards under God, and have an account to give of what is entrusted to us; this consists, with some, in this world's goods, more or less, and with all, in a portion of grace!

2. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I

hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

This will be said to every one of us. O that the words might sound deep into our hearts! It is a mercy that we are not yet called to our last account, and that we have a little time still allowed to us. Let us redeem and improve it, and be no longer wasters of our Lord's goods, by being idle for our souls.

3. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

And so he took a worse course. Alas! what a picture of human nature! He was not ashamed of dishonesty: and the excuse he made was, that he could not dig: this might, or might not be true.

4. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

5. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

6. And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

8. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

It was the steward's own master who commended him, not Christ. He took notice of it as a notable piece of cunning, but nothing else. For the steward was as much a knave to his master, and as unjust to him in this respect, as he had been before.

The reflection of our Lord upon it is to be noted. "For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light:"—They have but one end in view, and bend all their thoughts that way. The children of light have two; but, chiefly, the next world: this,

however, they must care for in part, while they are in it : and they are often too much divided between them. Christ says, this should not be. He observed it with grief and concern. The disciples of Christ should be all thought how to make sure of their *chief* end, as the unjust steward was to secure a maintenance.

9. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness ; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

This world's goods are called unrighteousness, because they are too generally ill got,—ill spent,—or ill kept. It was a very proper admonition to the publicans who were present at this discourse. And the advice to all is, so to manage their worldly substance, as to make it turn to their eternal interest, by thinking it a trust put into their hands, and not their own, to use, or hoard, as they please. “ That when ye fail,” as fail and die we must, “ they may receive you into everlasting habitations :” that is, you may be received. Is this to be a reward, for being liberal to the poor ? Will this merit heaven ? No ; Christ has done that for all. But, nevertheless, the way is still barred to a covetous, worldly heart.

10. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much : and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

He that is faithful in his worldly substance ; which is a very small matter in God's account, though not in ours. It is our ruin that we will not learn of Christ to call things by their right name. “ Is faithful also in much :”—though it is a little thing, in which he is faithful, his fidelity in it is a great thing : and shows him to be faithful in a much greater, namely, the grace that is given him.

“ And he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” Greatly, and every way unjust : he is false to his trust, and to the grace which should have directed him in the management of it. The sequel will show that this is very ill husbandry.

11. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches ?

Certainly riches are unrighteous to us, if we are not faithful in the use of them. Who will commit to your trust the true riches ? That is, of grace here, and heaven hereafter. The meaning is, we shall never come there. And observe, again, the wide difference betwixt Christ's thoughts and ours. We make but little account of what he knows to be the true riches.

12. And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own ?

Let us think, and call nothing else our own, but what will be so for ever.

13. No servant can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

No more can we serve both God and the world. Christ is still teaching us what we are unwilling to understand. One of these will have our hearts, and both cannot. And we need not be rich to make a wrong choice. A poor man may refuse to take God for his master, only he is the greater fool, in serving the world for nothing.

SECTION LV.

Chap. xvi. ver. 14—31.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

14. And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things : and they derided him.

Every mere worldly man derides Christ, for his cross-grained teaching. But we must submit ourselves to that, or we can have no salvation by him.

15. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men ; but God knoweth your hearts : for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

They had a fair appearance, else they could not have justified themselves to the world. But God knew their hearts ; and does he not know ours ? We know well enough that all *ought* to be sound there ; and we, too often, take it for granted without further inquiry, that it *is* so. This also is full proof that we are miserably deceived. The man whose eyes are opened knows better.

What men value themselves upon, and others value them for, is, oftentimes, abomination in the sight of God. Man's righteousness, at the best, will stand no trial : and whoever trusts in it, is here plainly told what it is. Hear then what we must do.

16. The law and the prophets were until John : since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

The privileges of this kingdom are remission of sins, new helps for obedience, and a right to eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ. " And every man presseth into it." This, therefore, is what we must do ; we must break through all difficulties, and press with all our might into God's kingdom of grace, knowing that we are saved by mercy from first to last, and not for the merit of our own works. We may not, indeed, be lawless in this kingdom, as we see in the next verse.

17. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

The law of the ten commandments, is everlasting and unchangeable, as a rule of life, though not as a covenant ; and none can belong to Christ who do not make it the law of their hearts in everything, as explained by him.

18. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery : and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

The Pharisees made light of this, and often divorced their wives ; and it is singled out to show them what sad work they made of the law, notwithstanding their high pretensions to righteousness. Let us take notice of ourselves ; and allow our own hearts to tell us in what instance, in how many, we are transgressors.

19. There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day :

20. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table : moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

He was probably relieved by the rich man ; or else he would not have laid at his gate. But if, indeed, he did feed him, and left his cure to the dogs, this was poor charity.

22. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried ;

The poor man was not admitted into heaven, merely for being poor, nor the rich man shut out of it, only for being rich ; but because the latter did set his heart upon riches, and the other did not.

23. And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

In torments, O dreadful, heart-breaking thought ! Fatal end of ill-enjoyed riches. " And Lazarus in his bosom." O happy, if holy poverty !

24. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame.

He cried, Father Abraham : he did not say, God, have mercy on me : he could not. There is no repenting in hell. He begged for a little ease, but this must now be denied him. His sentence was passed, and could not be reversed, nor mitigated.

25. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things : but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

This word would cut him to the heart. Christian ! that name will be a heavy load upon a lost soul in hell.

His condemnation was not for receiving or having good things, in his lifetime ; for then Abraham would not have been in heaven. But for receiving them as his portion, and giving himself wholly up to the enjoyment of them, without looking to anything better from the hands of God, or considering for what he received them. In a word, he was carnally-minded ; and that is death, as we are plainly told, Rom. viii. 6 ; and as it is the great design of this parable, or history, to teach us.

On the other hand, Lazarus had received evil things ; contentedly, and with his eyes fixed upon heaven.

26. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed : so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot ; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

O let all impenitent sinners think of that impassable gulf, lest death transport them beyond it, for ever from God !

27. Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house :

28. For I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Whether or not it is possible for the damned to have any such concern for their surviving friends, we need not inquire. This seems chiefly said, to introduce what follows.

29. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them.

It is at their peril if they do not. God knew it to be enough. And yet *we* have more, namely, Moses and the prophets fully opened by the gospel.

30. And he said, Nay, father Abraham : but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

By having this proof of a future state. And perhaps so may we think. But, Abraham says positively, not. The reason is, nothing can work a saving change but God ; and he does it, only, in his own way.

31. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

They might be full of wonder and surprise, for a time, at such an apparition, but their wills would not be changed. We all know that God says, repent ; and the heart which stubbornly resists Him, when he speaks to us in his word, is not to be wrought upon. If that holy book does not convert, it will condemn us, and we shall know the value of it when it is too late.

In this chapter, here is line upon line to set our thoughts and affections right. If we cleave to the world, we lose heaven ; if we disbelieve, or disregard the scriptures, in this point, we are past conviction. The parable of Dives and Lazarus speaks this to us all. Here is heaven and hell presented as it were to our bodily eyes ; with the way to obtain the one, and to escape the other. May the Lord, in his infinite mercy, grant that this affecting sight may lead us to make a right choice !

SECTION LVI.

Chap. xvii. ver. 1—10.

CHRIST TEACHES TO AVOID OCCASIONS OF OFFENCE.

1. Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come : but woe unto him, through whom they come !

Christ speaks here to all who are willing to learn of him

in simplicity, and take his word against the world. There is no other way of becoming his disciples.

It is impossible but that offences will come, considering the depraved state of mankind. The offences here spoken of, are hindrances thrown in the way of men's conversion, or which tend to obstruct them in their christian course. This is doing the work of Satan, and serving him effectually; and accordingly here is a terrible woe pronounced against it. Are we clear? Have we never spoken slightly of religion, or religious persons, or endeavoured to pull back those who were pressing forward, and aiming at more than ourselves? Let us lay our hands upon our hearts.

2. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

Let us tremble for all impenitent sinners, and especially for those who hinder the gospel of Christ.—*Edit.*

3. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

4. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

In this matter, take heed to yourselves. And that you may not lay a stumbling-block in the way of others by your own example, or unchristian behaviour: be all meekness and forgiveness.

Remember that he is not less thy brother for trespassing against thee. It is an endearing word, and will be sweetness in thine heart, when it is rooted there. In case of injuries, we are apt to take fire, and say, it is plain that such a one has used me ill, and so think our resentment warrantable. Now Christ allows all this: he supposes the injury to be real. But learn what he says: "Rebuke him, in love." This is a command. This thou must do. Thou must not suffer sin upon him. "And if he re-

pent, forgive him :” knowing that God has, upon his repentance ; and that he must stand as clear of all blame in the matter with thee, as with *Him*.

“ And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day,” that is, never so often,—his trespass, however repeated, must not shake thee off thy foundation of love, nor make any alteration in the state of thy own soul. But if he do not repent, what then ? still we must pity him, do good to him, bless and pray for him.

5. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

They knew this, indeed, to be hard, but notwithstanding all that they burned with desire to be the men ; and knowing that faith was the only way to be so, they begged for more of it. What they begged for, was faith in the power and mercy of God. What can *He* not do for us, and work in us ? And what can be a stronger bond upon us to forgive all others, than a sense of his pardoning love ?

6. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea ; and it should obey you.

Christ here speaks of a living faith, with the nature of a seed in it, springing and growing up, though never so small. He highly approved of their request, and shows what great things a true faith would do for them. Nothing can be more impossible to nature than to remove a large tree out of the earth with a word speaking ; and make it stand and take deep root in the sea. Sinner, thy conversion is by as great a miracle ; and faith does no less for all. But, alas ! we do not desire God to do great things for us.

7. But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by-and-bye, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat ?

Here is a seasonable check given to all proud, aspiring thoughts, as if we could merit anything by our highest attainments of faith, love, and obedience.

8. And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken ; and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink ?

9. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him ? I trow not.

10. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants : we have done that which was our duty to do.

Those who do the most, are the readiest to think, and say so : those who do little, or nothing, swell with self-conceit, and think they have made God their debtor. “ We have done that which was our duty to do.” God has a right to all our service ; and though he has promised to reward it, the humble man always retains a deep sense of his unworthiness, and knows that all is of grace. Our best works need a pardon, and if trusted in, will sooner sink us to hell, than raise us to heaven.

SECTION LVII.

Chap. xvii. ver. 11—19.

CHRIST HEALETH TEN LEPERS.

11. And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

12. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off :

They knew their condition,—believed in Jesus for help, and met him for that purpose. Meeting Christ is all in all to our cure. Know your sin, the leprosy of the soul, and nothing will keep you from him. And till you know it, you will not take one step to meet him.

13. And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

This is the very picture of a convinced, awakened sinner. Though the sight of his loathsomeness in sin daunts him, and makes him afraid and ashamed to approach God; yet he is placed under a strong necessity to cry, and that loudly too, since it is for the soul, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me."

14. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

They might have said, this was not what they wanted, to be ordered to show themselves to the priests, though it was the method appointed in the law, but to hear him speak the word for their cleansing. Nevertheless, they obeyed, and were healed. Learn from hence, to set a value upon God's ordinances, baptism, the Lord's supper, the preaching of the gospel. Of themselves they are not our cure: but if God has appointed them, they must not be slighted, and he does not ordinarily work without them.

15. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.

Faith in us answers to this sight. Faith is our healing; and when we have it, we shall glorify God with our tongues, our hearts, and in our lives.

16. And he fell on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

O the lively feeling, the humble posture, the gratitude of this man! And yet, what was his cleansing to ours from the power of sin? If we are unthankful for it, the very stones will cry out against us. We, Gentiles, may be well compared to these Samaritans: once strangers to God, but now made nigh by the blood of Christ. Ep. ii. 13.

17. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

Nine base, and ungrateful men, for one that was otherwise. A melancholy thing to reflect upon! God knows whether or not the unthankful among us are in this proportion.

18. There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

It was a heavy reproach, and the blackest character that could be given of them. Great as the mercy was which they had just received, behold there was no return of praise to God for it.

19. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

Why were not the rest made whole, by being cured of their leprosy? They were; and for anything we know, the cure of their bodies might be lasting. But they had a much worse leprosy cleaving to their souls: and only one of the number, the thankful man, was healed of that plague.

SECTION LVIII.

Chap. xvii. ver. 20—37.

THE COMING OF CHRIST.

20. And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

The Pharisees asked this with respect to the Messiah, whom they expected to come with outward pomp of an earthly kingdom, according to their carnal notions of it, so as to be seen and observed of all.

21. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

It should be; in the hidden man of the heart; or among you: Christ is come, and with him the kingdom of God, though you discern it not. We know and believe he is

come; but in vain, if we are strangers to the inward power of his kingdom.

22. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

Ye of the Jewish nation, and he here means the unbelieving part of it: these would have sad occasion to lament their rejection of Christ. This is said to us as well as to them, and is a warning to all to improve their day.

23. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them.

They will be deceivers: the true Christ will be gone.

24. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

The coming of Christ to judgment; and before that, his coming to destroy their city and nation. And both of them will be like the lightning, which is general, sudden, and only discoverable, just at the moment of its appearing.

25. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

O let us not reject him! He died that we might not. But if we do not receive him into our hearts, we are of that generation, and should have joined with it in condemning him.

26. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

This includes all the time from his first to his last coming. Both his coming to take vengeance on the Jews, and his coming to judgment at the end of the world, will be as sudden, unexpected, and as little prepared for by the generality, as the flood was.

27. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark; and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

They did, and thought of nothing else than their worldly interests and pleasures. Let us be instructed, and let all within us give way to the light of scripture. Some will say, were not these things both lawful and necessary? Yes; but let us learn from hence that the business of this world is neither ours only, nor our great concern in it; and that if we give ourselves wholly up to it, to the neglect of our souls, though in never so prudent, sober, and reputable a way, we are undone, and live only to perish for ever.

28. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

29. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

30. Even so shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

We may not live to see, and be surprised by that day. Death is, however, coming to every one of us; and yet most men die suddenly. Even sickness does not give us warning, and we think of nothing, almost to the last gasp, but living on.

31. In that day he that shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

“In that day,” chiefly of his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem, which is past, and does not so much concern us. But we are greatly concerned to carry our thoughts on to his last coming, of which that was a sign, and to consider in what state of preparation we are for the event. The meaning of the caution in the latter part of the verse is, that they were to make haste for their lives, and to make their escape, not having a moment to lose. Have *we*?

32. Remember Lot's wife.

She perished for looking back to Sodom. Her heart was in that look. No sin is little there. God sees this hour which way ours look.

33. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

He, who shall seek to save his life, by cleaving to the world in opposition to the will of God, shall lose it for ever. “ And whosoever shall lose his life,” to keep a good conscience, shall preserve it to life eternal.

34. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

The one shall be taken to God, and the other left to eternal perdition. Here is work for thought ! Who can help asking, Lord, is it I ? If my soul should be required of me this night, shall I be thus left ?

35. Two women shall be grinding together ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

36. Two men shall be in the field ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

37. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord ? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

Wherever, and whenever, men are dead to God, judgment will seize them, as certainly as eagles flock to their prey.

SECTION LIX.

Chap. xviii. ver. 1—8.

THE IMPORTUNATE WIDOW.

1. And he spake a parable to them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint ;

It is soon enough to give over praying, when we have no wants, nor any work to do, or resolve to have nothing more to do with God. A sense of our dependence and weakness would as naturally drive us to prayer, as a

drowning man calls out for help. Look here for a proof of your state, and do not conclude upon the outward life though never so decent. What are we in this respect? Do we, can we pray in secret, from the heart, from what we feel, as we would for relief from bodily pain, or worldly trouble, and knowing that we must be undone, if we have not what we ask for, namely, remission of sins, and strength to do the will of God, as taught by Christ? O that we knew what it is to be Christians!

2. Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man;

3. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

This was a helpless, poor woman. Think what the soul is without God.

4. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man:

5. Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

7. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

“And shall not God,” who hears prayer, who gives us the will to pray, and who wants nothing else from us? The rest is his work. Observe the character of the elect, or saints: they cry day and night; and here especially they are represented as crying, for help in trouble, and deliverance from their persecutors. The elect pray for the conversion of all. But if men will be still their own enemies, they know it is righteous with God to take vengeance upon them; and as they are conformed to the will of God in all things, they can give them up to his justice.

“Though he bear long with them,” his delay is not a denial. No true prayer is ever lost.

8. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.

When his own time comes, suddenly, unexpectedly: and

whenever it comes, it will be speedily, whether in this world or the next, for those on whom his vengeance falls.

8. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth ?

There is little enough at all times to make us think his coming cannot be far off to some of us. Let us take notice that without prayer there is no faith. It is the natural working of the new life that we receive from God, and the very breath by which it is preserved.

SECTION LX.

Chap. xviii. ver. 9—14.

THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN.

9. And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, and despised others.

The design of the former parable was to put us upon constant, unceasing prayer ; of this, to teach us how to pray, in humility, and with a deep sense of our unworthiness.

10. Two men went up into the temple to pray ; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

The former a man of great outward strictness : the latter a man of infamous character, but now convinced of his sin.

11. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

This was a boast, and not a prayer. You are to suppose that what he said was true. Here was a fair account of his duty to God and man, and more than even you pretend to. But still there was no confession. He had his eye only upon his goodness, such as it was. He had forgotten the pride of his heart. Men say they do no harm, live

quietly and civilly, wipe their mouths clean, and rip up their neighbours' characters; and what is this, but saying and supposing that they are not like other men? We may hold to this if we please; but let us remember that heaven is shut against our prayers. God sees us, not what we are in respect of others, but what we are to him, and his whole law in the heart. Let us look there, if we would know ourselves.

12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

“The publican stood afar off.” Holy, infinite God! How can we poor worms of the earth, sinful dust and ashes, do otherwise than stand at an humble, awful distance from thee! Though he dared not lift up his eyes, he looked the right way; and besides, he looked where most men never look, into his own heart.

He “smote upon his breast;” but his heart had smote him first. He knew where his pain was, and laid his hand upon it.

His cry was, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” This is a hard prayer: but till we come to it, we cannot come to Christ. I had rather say it truly than be the owner of the world.

14. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other:

One was, and the other was not, justified. You see the way; and that a proud heart cannot be in it. Do men say their hearts are not proud? They have said enough to show that they are hidden from them to this hour.

14. For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased;

By an haughty comparison of himself with others, or taking anything of what he is in his best estate to himself, without giving the whole glory of it to God. “Shall be

abased," he is nothing in God's sight. That is, utterly rejected.

14. And he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

He that humbleth himself as a creature and a sinner : and no man humbleth himself too much. The more humble he is, the higher he shall be exalted.

SECTION LXI.

Chap. xviii. ver. 15—30.

JESUS WITH THE CHILDREN AND THE RULER.

15. And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

Jesus knew better ; and as his manner was, took occasion from hence to raise an useful lesson of instruction for all.

16. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Jesus commands them to come to him in baptism now, since they are not less capable of a blessing now, than they were then. For, of such as resemble them in freedom from malice, in simplicity, and oneness of desire, "is the kingdom of God."

17. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in nowise enter therein.

As a little child does its food, having no other appetite ; and afterwards instruction, without disputing. So we must learn of Christ. So our great desire must be to the kingdom of God.

18. And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ?

He thought of nothing but meriting heaven by his works. Christ takes him in his own way, and tries him to the truth.

19. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.

As if he had said, Thou dost not know who I am, why then dost thou call me good? There is none good, and therefore, not thou thyself. Thou art not good enough of thyself for heaven, whatever thou thinkest.

20. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

21. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.

Supposing he had been correct in this assertion, which was not the case, one step more must be taken, or he could never set his foot in heaven. Alas! he stopped short, and lost all.

22. Now, when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

Do we lack but one thing? Sell all that thou hast, is a particular, positive command from God to this man. This was to be the trial of his obedience. And the inference with regard to us is, that we must be ready to part with all for Christ, whenever he calls us to make any sacrifice.

23. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful; for he was very rich.

He was now laid open to the root. His heart did not cleave to God, but to his possessions.

24. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

Notwithstanding what is here said, the poor will not understand to this day, in how much better condition they

are for salvation than the rich, who have so strong a chain about them to bind them to the world.

25. For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

And yet how fain would we all have this load upon our backs!

26. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?

What rich man, or who? Seeing that all have the same hearts; and if they are not rich, would be so.

27. And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

As if the rich man's conversion was but barely possible. But remember that the poor man can do nothing without God. And if we are not come to a true prayer for ourselves, all is to begin.

28. Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.

It may be asked with what view? As yet they were but babes in knowledge, and had not yet quitted the notion of a temporal kingdom. But they had a root of sincerity; and the same Spirit which opens the eyes of all, fully opened their's at the day of Pentecost.

29. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake,

That is, upon a divine call. This cannot be a general command. The instruction intended for all is, be ready, sit loose to the world, have no rival with Christ in our affections.

30. Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

He shall receive what is of manifold more value, namely, spiritual enjoyments, spiritual relations, spiritual hopes, and spiritual possessions. Believe this and thou art a Christian. What is thy treasure, and what does thy heart cleave to for happiness?

SECTION LXII.

Chap. xviii. ver. 31—43.

CHRIST SPEAKS OF HIS PASSION, AND RESTORES TO A
BLIND MAN HIS SIGHT.

31. Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

32. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on :

33. And they shall scourge him, and put him to death ; and the third day he shall rise again.

All these things came to pass in a very little time.

34. And they understood none of these things : and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

The same thing had been remarked before of the apostles, in chap. ix. 45. And it is here again expressed as strongly as possible. Let us learn from hence,

1st, To have patience with the ignorant. If they are in earnest, the time of their understanding will come.

2ndly, To have an eye to ourselves ; to consider in what respects we are blind to the plainest words of Christ ; and to submit implicitly to his teaching, though it is never so cross to our own knowledge, our wills, or our worldly interests.

35. And it came to pass, that, as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging :

Why is this told us, but to convince us of the power of Christ, and that we may come to him for our own cure ? Our distemper is spiritual blindness ; and the consequence of it, as you cannot but know, is much worse than that of natural blindness. Either Christ has opened our eyes, or he has not. Let us think how it is with us this very hour.

36. And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.

37. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

He is now passing by in the power of his gospel; and what is more, he is present in the power of his Spirit to heal us.

38. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

This cry is always heard.

39. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace; but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.

Whenever the mouths of any poor sinners are opened to cry for mercy, they will meet with many such officious rebukers. Their neighbours, and nearest friends, will be ready with their pestilent advice, to stop their crying. But, as in the present case, they will cry the more, when they know that they are blind. And they will know too, as he did, that their help is not in themselves.

40. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him,

41. Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

Christ knows what we want; but no relief comes, till he draws a confession from us. If we should say this, or, Lord have mercy upon me, without knowing, or believing that we are blind in sin, it is the way to keep us so for ever.

42. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee.

Faith alone saves all; but behold, without sense of sin going before, hearty trouble for it, and conviction of our helplessness under it, it is impossible.

43. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

Grant, O God, that what we have now heard may cause us to make deep search into ourselves, and that we may all glorify thee for thy mercy in Christ Jesus.

SECTION LXIII.

Chap. xix. ver. 1—10.

THE CONVERSION OF ZACCHEUS.

1. And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

In the foregoing chapter, Christ had said, that the conversion of a rich man, though hard, was possible with God. For their comfort and encouragement, here is an instance of it immediately subjoined, in the person of Zacchæus; and also of the natural workings, and effects, of a true conversion in all.

2. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

3. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

God had touched his heart, and he was resolved to have a sight of Jesus. O! the least working toward Christ is worth a world. If it is sincere, he sees it, and will as surely show himself to that man, with all his powerful love, as he did to Zacchæus.

4. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

He might have said, I would fain see Jesus, but I am little, and cannot help it, and must be content without a sight of him. But he did not make such an excuse. O no! here was a heart and good will; and everything he said and did shows that his heart was lively within him. What would you think, if you were to see a great rich man climbing up into a tree on such an occasion? Let us give up our unbelief, and our vain excuses; and let us see what

is at the bottom of our hearts, though men are never so low in the world, never so poor in knowledge, never so little in grace, let them be assured, if they are willing, there is a way to see Jesus.

5. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.

It was happy for Zacchæus that Jesus observed him. He saw him through and through, knew what brought him to the place, and perceived what was in his heart. So he sees every one of us, at the moment when our wills turn to him. Christ said to him, Come down, make haste; so he says in effect to all who express a real desire to see him by the eye of faith, and to embrace him. "For to-day I must abide at thy house." These are sweet words to a fainting soul! And wherever he comes, it is to abide always, if it is not our own fault. Has he been knocking, day by day, at the door of our house, and do we still shut him out? Let the hardened, and unhappily blinded, whosoever they are, know, that as sure as Christ is not there, Satan is.

6. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

Let each one ask, was it ever such a day with me? Can I think of a time when my heart longed for Jesus, and sprang forward to welcome him? Let not any fly to their Christian name and profession, good meanings, outward appearance, or lifeless performances in religion, when there is no inward prizing, or joyful acceptance of Jesus, from a sense of their helpless and undone state.

7. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

He never was a guest with a sinner who proudly says this. Where can he be a guest upon earth, if not with sinners? Sinner, this is joyful news to thee. Thy soul is a polluted lodging for him; but he hath set his love upon

it, and, if thou receivest him, he will make it fit for himself.

8. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I return him four-fold.

He promised from that day forward to give the half of his goods. If this command, "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute to the poor," was an absolute command to all, at all times, Christ would have told him at once, that this was not enough. But what we are principally to remark, is the *effect* of his conversion. He was a changed man, his heart was turned within him, and he was ready to make full proof of it by his actions. How very few can say, as he did, "the half of my goods I give to the poor," since but few have so much to spare. But we *must* say, one and all, and we *shall* say, when Christ comes to us: "Behold, Lord, I give myself wholly up to thee; and whatsoever evil I have done, I am heartily troubled for it, and resolve to do so no more." Till you come to this, all is darkness and self-deceit.

"I restore fourfold." This was a great deal more than the law required in case of voluntary restitution. But nevertheless full restitution must be made by all, as far as it is in their power, or else there can be no repentance. This very thing makes the repentance of great numbers almost impossible.

9. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

The meaning of our Saviour was, that salvation was come along with himself, by whom alone, indeed, it can come, and who brings it freely to all. He declares Zacchæus to be a son of Abraham by descent, but now truly so by faith, and conversion. Nothing but this spiritual birth, whether in Jew or Christian, makes a son of Abraham.

10. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

All men are indeed lost, if sin makes us lost. Let us find a lost state in ourselves, and *he* will certainly find *us*. Till then he seeks, but does not save.

SECTION LXIV.

Chap. xix. ver. 11—27.

PARABLE OF THE TEN PIECES OF SILVER.

11. And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

Which they supposed would be a glorious kingdom upon earth, with the Jewish nation at the head of it. Let us not mistake in our day. If we belong to the kingdom of Christ, he has work for us to do in it, and will come in his own time to inquire how we have performed it.

12. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

As Christ has received for himself, and his faithful servants a kingdom. But let us remember the word *return*.

13. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

Every man has his work, under Christ, assigned him. What kind of Christians are those who never take account of it? Each one of us has sins to be forgiven, an evil nature which needs to be cleansed, and a heart to be turned from the world unto God; and he who says, "Occupy," does not leave you without helps. This should be thought of. Again, attend to the words, "Till I come."

14. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

The citizens who hated Christ were the Jews at the

time the parable was spoken, and all persons now who will not see a want of him, or who love their old state better.

15. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

Let us set that time always before our eyes when Christ will call us, and think we hear that call now.

How few know what the Christian's trade is,—consider it as the great business of life,—compute or compare its great advantages,—or keep any regular account of gain and loss, as men do for this world!

16. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

It is but a very little we have to be faithful in, or can do for Christ; and yet our reward will be unspeakably great; for every pound gained authority over a city. Yea, more, an everlasting kingdom in heaven.

18. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

Why did not he also gain ten? God alone can answer this question. Let us be faithful to our ability, and he will require no more of us; our reward will be in proportion to our gains. But if we make this a pretence for sloth, and think to be accepted for doing nothing, that which follows will strike all our hopes dead.

19. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

A similar diligence has a similar reward.—*Edit.*

20. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.

Every one is this hider of his pound, who does not plainly purpose and sincerely endeavour to grow in grace,

and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; and who does not carry on his work by prayer.

21. For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

God knows what we shall have to say to him at the last day. But this very excuse lies closer to our hearts than we imagine; and though our souls are at stake, many say openly, this, or that is hard. And what is this but making God a hard task-master? What did this man say more?

22. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow.

Every mouth will be stopped, when God comes to reckon with us, and our consciences will join with him in condemning us. And mark it well; he is a wicked servant, because he is a slothful one. He is condemned, not so much for doing ill, as for doing nothing. Our bodies will perish by idleness, as well as by a stab. Think of thy soul. It is in a sickly, starving condition, and if thou wouldest save it, thou must be working for it day and night.

23. Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

As if he had said, Why didst thou not endeavour to do what was commanded, if thou thoughtest such a strict account would be required of thee?

24. And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

A reward beyond his desert. The answer of the Lord implies that the servant had been faithful, and therefore he should have more.

25. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

26. For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall

be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

The man “that hath not,” is he, who does not use and improve what he hath, to the end for which it was given. As keeping money always locked up in a chest, is the same as not having it.

27. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

We see who are Christ’s enemies. There is no middle way. If we do not take him unfeignedly for our Lord and King to reign over us, he knows we are enemies to him in our hearts. Such he will command to be slain, to be cast into the lake of fire, and given up for ever to the second death.

SECTION LXV.

Chap. xix. ver. 28—48.

CHRIST RIDETH INTO JERUSALEM; AND CLEANSSES THE TEMPLE.

28. And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

This should not pass unobserved. He led the way, though he knew he was going to suffer the whole weight of God’s vengeance for the sin of the world.

29. And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage, and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,

30. Saying, Go ye into the village over against you: in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither.

31. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.

Though Jesus was Lord of all things, he would not have his disciples take the colt without leave.

32. And they that were sent, went their way, and found even as he had said unto them.

33. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt ?

34. And they said, The Lord hath need of him.

35. And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.

They placed Jesus, the king of heaven and earth, upon a colt, the foal of an ass. The word Jesus is here emphatical. By choosing to enter into Jerusalem on an ass, he declared that his kingdom is not of this world. The triumph of Jesus is humility. He preached it in his birth, and he preached it to the last. It is a hard lesson; but so necessary, that he would stoop very low to teach it.

36. And as they went, they spread their clothes in the way.

To do honour to him as their King.

37. And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen;

We have now read an account of a great many of Christ's mighty works in the gospel, and all to this end, that we may praise God for his mighty work in us, and say as these persons did.

38. Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

This peace in heaven, is by the reconciliation of sinful man to God through Christ. O that our hearts were made to speak, and join their song of thanksgiving with the blessed angels, for this adorable manifestation of his great glory.

39. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude, said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

These were blind Pharisees! Jesus, however, knew best who they were who deserved the rebuke.

40. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if

these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

Can this be said of us, that we hold our peace? We have, it is true, the praise of Christ many a time upon our tongues; but if it begins and ends there, he regards it not.

41. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

He thought not of himself, and his own sufferings. O these were speaking, convincing tears! Could he not then save them, if he would? No, he could not; they would not be saved. Everything had been done for them on God's part, and all he could do farther was to weep over them.

42. Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

This is written, that it may be a warning to every one of us, that we may know, that our destruction will be of ourselves, if we neglect the great salvation of God.

43. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side.

44. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

This is as exact and circumstantial a description of the siege and taking of Jerusalem, nearly forty years before the event took place, as if it had been made on the spot, and spoken after the event.

45. And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought;

He was moved with holy zeal for the honour of the temple, and exerted his divine authority against its sacrilegious profaners. The instruction to us, is to bear a suitable re-

verence to the place of God's worship ; and, especially, not to bring our worldly thoughts into it.

46. Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer : but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Praying hearts would bring us constantly to the house appointed for the worship of God, through the mediation of his only-begotten Son ; and keep us close to the business of it.

47. And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him,

48. And could not find what they might do : for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

Let us hear him now. Let us hear his words in the Holy Scriptures :—let us hear him speaking to our hearts. This attention is life, happiness, and salvation.

SECTION LXVI.

Chap. xx. ver. 1—8.

CHRIST AVOUCHES HIS AUTHORITY.

1. And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders,

Jesus preached the gospel,—remission of sins, and peace with God ; the way to it, by repentance, and faith ; the way to keep it, by newness of life.

2. And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things ? or who is he that gave thee this authority ?

Jesus had told them this by his miracles over and over again ; and his telling them in plain words would not have cured them of their blindness. What indeed will cure us, when we are resolved not to see ?

3. And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me:

4. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?

If their hearts would have suffered them to have given a right answer, it might have opened a way for them to the whole truth. We are not to suppose that this question was evasive, or only to escape the snare that was laid for him. He knew that he was within a very few days of his death, and had no thought of avoiding it. His design was to let in the light upon them, if they would have given way to it.

5. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not?

So men who are prejudiced against the truth, turn themselves into all shapes to avoid it. Though they are never so hard put to it, something or other they must pretend, to blind conscience, and keep off conviction.

6. But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet.

7. And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was.

They would not please Christ with their answer, and durst not displease the people. They had not one grain of sincerity in them, and did not speak their minds either one way or another. He was as reserved with them, and showed that he could have nothing to do with such men.

8. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

They were not worthy to know. He left them to themselves. It was a precious moment for them, and they lost it. How many such seasons do we lose?

SECTION LXVII.

Chap. xx. ver. 9—18.

CHRIST ANSWERETH THE SCRIBES.

9. Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.

The vineyard was the Jewish church and people then; it sets forth Christians now, with all the means of grace and salvation in their hands. The parable is for us, as well as them; and we shall get no instruction from it, if it does not help us to see our own case.

10. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty.

It was at the season, when he knew fruit might be expected; having given them time, and afforded them means for it. "But the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty."—One was a consequence of the other. Not having fruit, their wicked nature worked according to its kind, and they could not afford the servant civil usage; they did not only send him away empty, but beat him also. It is the same world still.

11. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty.

12. And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out.

Observe, and wonder at the patience of God; and also what sufferings he exposes his servants to for the sake of men's souls. When will they be as dear to ourselves? Still he does not give them up. So long as one thing more can be done for them, they shall not perish. All who do perish, will know one day that they have resisted all the means that could be used to prevent it.

13. Then said the lord of the vineyard. What shall I do? I

will send my beloved son : it may be they will reverence him when they see him.

“ What shall I do ? ” what can I do more ? what will I not do for these unhappy creatures, who are thus pulling destruction upon their own heads ? Oh ! it is a marvellous opening of our danger in sin, and God’s concern for us.

We may easily apply the verse, as we proceed. We know who this beloved son is, and that he hath been sent to us. “ It may be they will reverence him when they see him.” God knew, indeed, that they would not. The design of the expression is to show what might have been expected, and what in all reason they should have done.

14. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir : come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be our’s.

We may think their sin unparalleled, and that we abhor it. But sinners are always the same ; and those who reject Christ now, would have joined with the Jews in crucifying him. The scripture says plainly, “ they *do* crucify to themselves the Son of God.” The end they propose is to obtain the inheritance. So many think in their hearts, though, perhaps, they do not believe it, and dare not speak it out, that they should be better, if not without God in the world, yet without his law. If they had their choice, they had rather be left to themselves. This is, in fact, the choice of all who do not submit to Christ.

15. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them ?

A little before it was said, What shall I do to save them ? Now that time is past ; mercy is at an end, and judgment must have its turn.

16. He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others.

God grant that we may render him the fruit of it ! For we are now the husbandmen, and if we do not, their doom will be our’s.

16. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.

This was a vain wish, and as vain a protestation of their innocence. Notwithstanding, they *were* destroyed, for a warning to all. It is a vain wish in others, when they are ripe for destruction, to deprecate the judgment of God. He cannot deny himself to spare us. He is not just such a being, as we please to make him. His *justice* is as much his nature, as his mercy. He has so revealed himself; and we are undone, by not noticing his attributes and perfections. Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.

17. And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?

Jesus beheld them with a mixture of authority, indignation, and pity, in his countenance. Doubtless it was a piercing look. He showed them that they did not understand their own scriptures. He wished them to know, that he might be the Messiah, notwithstanding their rejection of him, and that he could not be the Messiah, if he had not been rejected.

18. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

It will be an awful thing to fall upon it, or be offended at Christ on any account whatsoever; though his vengeance will fall heavier on some than on others, according to the degrees of their obstinacy, and malicious wickedness. Let us endeavour to know what is in our hearts, since Christ does.

SECTION LXVIII.

Chap. xx. ver. 19—38.

CHRIST CONFOUNDS THE SCRIBES AND THE SADDUCEES.

19. And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought

to lay hands on him ; and they feared the people : for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

And yet they continued as blind as ever. What ! they the men ! They protest against it, it could not be. And their next thought was how to be revenged on him. Let all wicked men take heed that it be not spoken against them. If such are full of self-conceit, and proof against conviction, as they were, let sinners see in them what inward workings they will have. Christ himself is out of their reach ; but those who preach him truly, must stand the brunt of the malice of obstinate sinners.

20. And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

21. And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly :

22. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no ?

23. But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me ?

We may suppose Christ asked this question with grief and concern. O ! why will you still be making trial of me, when you should know what is within yourselves ?

24. Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it ? They answered and said, Cæsar's.

25. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

No one can be a christian who has not his eye upon these two commandments, as well as any other. The world is very favourable to those who sell or buy unaccustomed goods, or rob God in his tithes ; but his judgment will be according to truth, and not according to man's opinion. We may keep our reputation with a very bad conscience ; but the latter only will be inquired into.

26. And they could not take hold of his words before the people : and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

Thus all sinners will be silenced at the day of judgment.

27. Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection ; and they asked him,

28. Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

29. There were therefore seven brethren : and the first took a wife, and died without children.

30. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless.

31. And the third took her ; and in like manner the seven also : and they left no children, and died.

32. Last of all the woman died also.

33. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she ? for seven had her to wife.

See here, the wisdom of Christ triumphs over the folly of men.—*Edit.*

34. And Jesus answering, said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage :

35. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage :

36. Neither can they die any more : for they are equal unto the angels ; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

Some of the most important questions which a man can put to himself, are the following :—What is the chief end and aim of my life ? What is the great wish of my heart ? Is it to be a child of God, that thereby I may be entitled to a happy resurrection ? When this hope is lively in us, and governs all our thoughts, words, and actions, our eyes are opened : we are changed men and women, and born again of the Spirit. And in all conditions, the thought, that though all other projects fail us, this never can, will make life easy, and death welcome.

37. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the

bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

The argument seems to be this ; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are now living ; because God is not the God of the dead, but of the living : but the souls only are not the men ; therefore there will be a resurrection of the body.

38. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living ; for all live unto him.

All whose God and Father he is. As they live unto him here, in faith, love, and obedience, they shall live with him for ever, in soul and body, in heaven.

SECTION LXIX.

Chap. xx. ver. 39 to chap. xxi. ver. 4.

CHRIST FURTHER WARNS THE PEOPLE, AND COMMENDS
THE CHARITY OF A WIDOW.

39. Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said.

Saying this truly and from the heart, is life. Not as the Pharisees did, who, though they held with him in the point of a resurrection, yet would not hear him in other things ; and especially when he showed them the unsoundness of their hearts. The Christian can say in all things, “ Master, thou hast well said.”

40. And after that they durst not ask him any question at all.

41. And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son ?

42. And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

43. Till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

This is a quotation from Psalm cx. 1, whence our Saviour quotes the verse, upon which he raises the question contained in the verse following.—*Edit.*

44. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son ?

Christ *was* David's son, according to the flesh ; but revealed to him in a higher capacity, as his Lord ; even the Lord God, and as such the Saviour of mankind. Christ, therefore, here asserts his divinity. He was David's Lord for salvation ; and Thomas said no more than he did, when he called him " My Lord, and my God." Even so, Lord Jesus, grant that we may know thee now by faith, obey thee as our Lord, and after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead.

45. Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples,

46. Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts :

47. Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers : the same shall receive greater damnation.

He here shows them in what respects, particularly, the multitude was to beware of them. They were not humble, they loved pre-eminence and distinction ; they were covetous and guilty of abominable acts of oppression, under a cloke of religion. And does not this teach us all to beware of such tempers in ourselves, and to lay the axe to the root of our pride, and worldly hearts, if we would be Christ's disciples ?

Chap. xxi. 1. And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

2. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.

3. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast in more than they all.

God looks at the largeness of the heart, and not of the gift. Though it was but a very little that the poor widow

gave, it is certain she secreted nothing. The rich may give a great deal, applaud themselves, and be highly applauded by others, and yet, with astonishing guilt, keep back a great deal more that they should have given. There is a different book of charities kept in heaven, from what is kept on earth. The intention, the affection, the ability, the occasion, must be taken into the account. Happy is the man, whose beneficence is a continued act of adoration, gratitude, and obedience to God, as well as pity and liberality to the poor.

4. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

This is not said for our imitation, at all events: but partly to upbraid the rich for not doing more; partly to show what true charity will do, though to the pinching of a man's self; and what it is which makes our gifts acceptable to God.

SECTION LXX.

Chap. xxi. ver. 5—24.

CHRIST FORETELLETH THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE,
THE CITY, AND THE NATION.

5. And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,

6. As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

The Jews beheld the sacred buildings with wonder and delight, not doubting of their durability. But though they were goodly in their eyes, they were abominable in God's sight for the wickedness of the people, and the decree was gone out against them. There is no speaking

peace to ourselves, so much as for one moment, in the most flourishing condition of health, strength, and riches, when we have made God our enemy.

7. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?

8. And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

They would be deceived, by going after false Christs, and deserting the true one. Men may, indeed, do this at any time, by setting up an image of their own making, instead of Christ. What, for instance, are those, who look for salvation from him without holiness; or those, on the other hand, who trust as much, or more, in themselves, than in his merits? We know from history that this, and all the other particulars here mentioned, which were to take place, before and at the destruction of Jerusalem, came to pass exactly as they were foretold. And I observe, that we may take Christ's word for the certainty of his last coming; this is to be noted, in order that what is said of it may make the deeper impression upon us.

9. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.

The end here spoken of is the destruction of Jerusalem.

10. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

11. And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

These expressions are to be understood according to the language of prophecy.—*Edit.*

12. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

This was fulfilled in the persecution of the apostles and others, beginning immediately after the resurrection of Christ.

13. And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

It should be to them for a testimony to the goodness of their cause, and the power of God enabling them to suffer for it. And it is also signified, that their testimony should be prevailing. Many, no doubt, would be wrought upon by their constancy in suffering; which is always of great force to open men's eyes, and to bring them to the acknowledgment of the truth.

14. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer :

15. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

This promise will infallibly be made good to all who trust in it. Their adversaries might indeed stop their mouths, together with their breath; and this is, too often, man's way of arguing. But it is no answer to the wisdom of God,³ who speaks by his servants: as their day is, so will their help be.

16. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

Natural affection must give way to the *love* of Christ; and well might he require this of us, when hatred of him and his ways can so easily get the better of it.

17. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

Christ's faithful followers, in order to do good to the few who are capable of it, must incur the hatred of the rest. It would be a new world, if even the better sort were not too forward to despise and vilify them, as fanatics and enthusiasts.

18. But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

It may mean that they should have a particular provi-

dence watching over them, and that before God's time nothing should hurt them. But I suppose that it relates chiefly to their eternal interests. If we are unhurt in that, we are safe, whatever befalls us.

19. In your patience possess ye your souls.

That patience which shall be given you ; neither fretting against God, nor quarrelling with men. O that we all had this safeguard and armour of defence, in all troubles !

20. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

21. Then let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains ; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out ; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

The Christians remembered this warning, and saved themselves by flight. Eusebius says, they were saved by a divine admonition at the time, and that they were directed where to go.—(Ecc. Hist. B. iii. c. 5.)

22. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

All things which God has before spoken, will be fulfilled to the end of the world, one as well as another ; the great day of vengeance on the wicked, yet to come, as sure as those which are past. The things which are written, are the word and truth of God, and cannot fail, and there is no safety for us, but in having them written upon our hearts.

23. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days ! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

24. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

Jerusalem should be possessed by other nations ; as it has been ever since, and will be till God's appointed time for the restoration of the Jews, and a more general conversion of the Gentiles than has yet taken place.

SECTION LXXI.

Chap. xxi. ver. 25—38.

SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING.

25. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

26. Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

Those men's hearts will fail who have not the fear of God in them. To those who have that fear, it will be both a terrible and a joyful day.

27. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

28. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

The things which begin to come to pass are mentioned in verse the twenty-fifth, and the following, which relate to the destruction of Jerusalem. "Your redemption draweth nigh;" here Christ speaks of their deliverance from their troubles and persecutions, which the Jews would no longer be able to inflict upon them.

29. And he spake to them a parable, Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;

30. When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

31. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

The time when the Jewish economy would cease, together with the destruction of their city and temple: when God's kingdom under Christ would be his only kingdom upon earth, and be greatly enlarged by a more plentiful accession of the Gentiles.

32. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

This came to pass thirty-nine years after.

33. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

They did not with respect to the destruction of Jerusalem.

34. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

This was a warning to the disciples; and it is intended to be a caution to us. "That day," or the day which gives us up to it. Observe, that our hearts may not only be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, but with the cares of life, to the loss of our souls. For whatever we neglect them, if they are neglected, we perish.

35. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the ace of the whole earth.

Suddenly, like the springing of a snare. Men will no more look for it before-hand then, than they do now; and the circumstance that men do not think of it, is no proof that it is far off.

36. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

We see the way to escape, at Christ's final coming to judgment, as they did then; but let none think that they shall be able to stand before him without watchfulness and prayer. To expect and prepare for his coming is the work of every Christian, and these are some of the chief purposes for which he is a Christian, if he knows why he is so; and this work will not prosper in our hands without continual prayer. How many in that day will be found who never were in a state of watchfulness; how many who never put up one true prayer in their whole lives, for their souls' salvation!

37. And in the day-time he was teaching in the temple : and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.

This relates to the time past, for after this he went no more to the temple.

38. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

Whatever they meant, or however they profited, it is our business to attend duly upon Christ, hearing him in his word, and by it receiving him into our hearts.*

SECTION LXXII.

Chap. xxii. ver. 1—18.

CHRIST EATS THE PASSOVER.

1. Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover.

2. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him ; for they feared the people.

Christ was now fully prepared to enter upon that scene of his sufferings which terminated, as he foretold, in his death for the redemption of mankind.—*Edit.*

3. Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

4. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how they might betray him unto them.

5. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.

6. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

Judas is a memorable and fatal instance of the power of covetousness. Let us not deceive ourselves. A covetous, or, which is the same thing, a worldly heart, which does not seek the kingdom of God, in the first place, always sells

* Vide, Observations on the chapter at the end of the Gospel.

Christ. The world is preferred to him, by a free choice, though not by as deliberate a bargain and sale, as Judas made.

7. Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.

8. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.

9. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare ?

10. And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.

11. And ye shall say to the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples ?

12. And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished : there make ready.

Christ either knew the man's heart, or framed it for his purpose at the instant of speaking this. May we be as ready to entertain him.

13. And they went, and found as he said unto them : and they made ready the passover.

And shall we find him less than his word in anything he has said to us, or promised on our behalf ? They went at his bidding. They believed that it would be as he had told them. Here is our pattern.

14. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

15. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer :

Christ had earnestly desired it, though he knew it would be the last time of his eating and drinking with them. His great, burning desire, his joy, was to put the finishing hand to his work, by suffering a cruel death. Let this inflame our desires after him. Think how dear thy soul is to him ; and know what the loss of it would be, by Christ's concern for it, and also the price he paid to redeem it from death and hell. If ever we know what a passing from death

unto life is, there will be a looking to, and longing for Jesus, as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

16. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

The meaning is not that he would eat of it after; but that what was signified by the Paschal Lamb was now about to be fulfilled in the sacrifice of himself; and that the universal kingdom of God, founded in his death, would immediately take place.

17. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves :

18. For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

SECTION LXXIII.

Chap. xxii. ver. 19—38.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE SUPPER OF THE LORD INSTITUTED.

19. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body* which is given for you : this do in remembrance of me.

Thou who slightest this plain, positive, dying command of the Saviour, what art thou? Call not thyself a Christian. Thy sin is written on thy forehead. Again, “Do this,” is, never neglect it, when thou canst, and hast opportunity. When a person does it but seldom, it is a plain proof that the heart is not to Christ, and his benefits; and that all is cold and dead within such a Christian.

20. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

This expression explains the foregoing, “This is my

* Vide Note at the end of the Gospel.

body," the cup itself was not the New Testament, but the sign, or token of it, and a speaking image of Christ's blood-shedding, by which we are intitled to the benefits of the new testament, or covenant. Let us think again, what those benefits are,—a new state of adoption, and a right to the kingdom of heaven, by the remission of our sins, and the purification of our hearts; and then we shall gladly do this in remembrance of him—of what he must do for us, and what he is to us, both as a sacrifice of atonement, and the restorer of a new life in us.

21. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.

22. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined; but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!

Every false-hearted Christian is this traitor in his degree; and the woe here pronounced belongs to all, who neglect his salvation, and make ungrateful returns for his benefits.

23. And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

In this inquiry, there was probably a mixture of curiosity; and too little self-loathing. We shall do well to limit our inquiries into futurity, to the ends of practice, watchfulness, and prayer.—*Edit.*

24. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

It is truly admirable that the failings of the apostles should be recorded by themselves, and this account of them may be of great use to us. It proves them to be sincere men, and worthy of regard in their testimony; and it is also an encouragement to all sinners to come to Christ, and shows them what advantage they will derive from coming to him.

25. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

They are deservedly called benefactors, if they govern well. But the apostles were to have no such ambition. They were to help men in a different way, and conduct them to greatness by the road of humility.

26. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

27. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.

O shame to all the pride of man. And yet it is the last thing that dies in us.

28. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.

They betrayed their ignorance and weakness on many occasions. But here is a great word spoken on their behalf; they *continued* with him in all his trials and troubles; and Jesus would soon advance them to very high degrees of knowledge and perfection in his kingdom upon the earth; and afterwards to the highest place in his kingdom in heaven.

29. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;

30. That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

These are figurative expressions, and they point out the apostles as the chief rulers of the gospel kingdom during their lives.—*Edit.*

SECTION LXXIV.

Chap. xxii. ver. 31—46.

PETER'S DENIAL; AND CHRIST'S AGONY.

31. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Satan had them, to sift and shake, with all his malice. But they were safe by Christ's prayer; as we are, when we belong to him. Christ prayed for all such, John xvii. And all our prayers for ourselves are available, only as offered in his name, and presented to God by him. Note the word *sift*. Satan carries on the work of God in the saints, and winnows out all their chaff, though he designs it not. Simon Peter was sorely shaken by his fall, but he would be more upon his guard for it ever after: he would learn to distrust himself, and be better able to help others. If our faith fails, all fails; as Peter soon found to his cost. "And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren;" as all do who are converted.

33. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

He was greatly mistaken as to his own strength, as we are too apt to be.

34. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

35. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? and they said, Nothing.

36. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.

This was a signification of their danger; and not a direction to go and buy swords, to use in his defence.

37. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

38. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

Perhaps they meant, that they had only two swords; or, that two with his help would be enough. They do not

seem to have understood him. He did not explain himself further. They wanted none. He would preserve them without any, and he did not need to be delivered, except by himself.

39. And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.

40. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

Here Christ's conflict began, and was all presented to him. O my soul, be thou with him in this place, and follow him with deep humiliation through the scene of his sufferings. "Pray that ye enter not into temptation," lest ye fall by it. There is no other way to avoid falling. Pray, and you will not fall.

41. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

41. Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

The load of our sins was so heavy upon Jesus, that he knew not how to stand under it. How shall we be ever able to bear the weight of them ourselves? We here see them put into God's balance. Is not this an opening of hell to us? Christ prayed that his Father's will might be done, though what he suffered was inexpressible.

43. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

Consider again, what sin is, little as it may seem to thee, and what Jesus endured for it, when he needed this apparition, and a fresh supply of strength, to enable him to hold out.

44. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

He was enduring unutterable woe for us, that we might never feel as he did. Yet sin is made a heavy burden to

some in this life, by the greatest of all mercies, that they may not lie groaning under it for ever.

45. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,

46. And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray lest ye enter into temptation.

Not praying is the dead sleep of the soul, and every temptation will overset us.

SECTION LXXV.

Chap. xxii. ver. 47—62.

CHRIST'S BETRAYAL; PETER'S DENIAL.

47. And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.

48. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

Christ knew what Judas's design was under this show of kindness and respect. He knows what is at the bottom of our profession.

49. When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?

50. And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

This was Peter, who did not stay for an answer; his temper was naturally warm. But afterwards, when grace had the management of it, he could be as forward for God.

51. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

Christ was highly displeased with this small degree of resistance, and as it were begged pardon for it.

52. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?

53. When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hand against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

The power of Satan over Christ, for the sin of the world. He had taken it upon him, and must pay the penalty. But it was comparatively but an hour. He soon conquered for all who will conquer in him.

54. Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

Nature could carry him but a little way. With no better support, he soon began to flag, and was as stout in his three-fold denial of Christ, as he had been in drawing his sword for him.

55. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

56. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

57. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

58. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

59. And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilean.

60. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

61. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter: and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Peter had an excellent root in him, and one look from Christ fetched him back.

62. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

O Jesus! bring our sins to remembrance, and pierce us to the heart with them, as thou didst Peter.

SECTION LXXVI.

Chap. xxii. ver. 63—71.

THE SAVIOUR MOCKED.

63. And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him.

Let us think now only and altogether of our own sins, otherwise what we here read will be lost upon us. *Our own* sins, whosoever we are; *these* mocked and blasphemed him, blindfolded him, smote him on the face, caused his bloody sweat, struck the thorns into his temples, drove the nails into his hands and feet, and thrust the spear into his side. For our sake he endured all this, because we were lost creatures, and to deliver us from the eternal death of our souls; yea, for our sake the Son of God submitted to all these indignities and sufferings. Oh! let us see in this glass, what we are, and what sin is; and tremble at our danger.

64. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee?

65. And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.

The number and character of those indignities which Christ suffered for our sins, are more than the Evangelists could enumerate.—*Edit.*

66. And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying,

67. Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe:

68. And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.

69. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.

This Son of man, now standing before you as a criminal, when he has finished the work which he came to do, shall sit down on the right hand of God. As the *Son of man*, for *men*. As the Son of God, it was his right before. Blessed comfort in those words, Son of man !

70. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God ? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.

71. And they said, What need we any further witness ? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

That for which they condemned him is our consolation and joy. Belief in the heart, that Jesus is the Son of God, is salvation. The gospels were written that *we* might hear, and believe this.

The design of our Lord's coming into the world, was to purge away our sins by his propitiatory death, and sacrifice,—to work out a complete righteousness for us,—to give us a perfect rule of holy living,—and to convince us of the necessity of conforming ourselves to it, in order to our being made fit for heaven and happiness : it was also necessary that his death should be recorded, and at the same time his innocency fully vindicated, to take away all suspicion of his suffering as a malefactor. And accordingly all the four Evangelists agree in relating his death, the judge's repeated attestation of his innocence, and that the only crime laid to his charge by his malicious persecutors, the Jews, was his taking upon himself to be the Christ, the Son of God. But still the great evidence was wanting to recommend him to the belief of mankind, as sent of God to be the Saviour of the world. And therefore God himself confirms and crowns all with his own testimony, in raising him from the dead : with the account of which all the four gospels conclude. Let us attend to this, and every other part of them, with hearts full of gratitude to God for sending his only-begotten Son, to suffer death for our redemption ; and with earnest desires to be partakers of it, by faith, and our own resurrection to newness of life. But remem-

ber that no man can have this desire, or the least degree of faith in Christ for remission, and renovation, till he sees and abhors that sin in himself, which nailed him to the cross.

SECTION LXXVII.

Chap. xxiii. ver. 1—11.

JESUS IS ACCUSED BEFORE PILATE, AND SENT TO
HEROD.

1. And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.

2. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.

He did say this. But he also said as plainly, that his kingdom was not of this world; and he was so far from perverting the people, by forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, that he positively commanded it. Just so the truth is always treated in his servants. The world has no way to run it down, but by wresting what they say to a wrong meaning. We may also see in this, one reason why Christ sometimes withdrew himself, and would not suffer his miracles to be made public. He knew his enemies would make a handle of it to accuse him. And herein he is a pattern to his followers, to be as careful as possible not to give occasion of reproach to them that seek it.

3. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.

4. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

No other than histaking upon himself to be the king of the

Jews. And Pilate did not think it worth his attention to take any notice of that, seeing him in such mean circumstances, without one follower, and brought before him as a criminal by the Jews themselves.

Nevertheless it seems as if Pilate was divinely overruled in what he said, and had words put into his mouth, as Caiaphas had. Christ's owning himself as a king was crime enough, and what one would imagine Pilate in virtue of his office must necessarily have condemned him for, as high treason against Cæsar.

5. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

He did indeed stir them up; as he does us, to repentance, faith, and newness of life. They meant to sedition; but Pilate saw it to be false.

6. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilæan.

7. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.

Pilate seems to have made a convenience of Christ to pay a compliment to Herod. At so small a price did he set the liberty of the Saviour of the world.—*Edit.*

8. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

Herod had heard of many to no purpose, and Christ knew that his seeing one would not change his heart. We are in Herod's case. We hear, but see not. And if we do not believe from what we hear, seeing would do us no good, whatever we may think to the contrary.

9. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

That is, he answered him nothing to clear himself. And

yet though the chief priests clamoured so vehemently against him, and he pleaded not a word in his own defence, Herod would not condemn him. What could be a stronger proof of his innocence?

10. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.

11. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

They set Him at nought in whom all the wisdom and power of the Godhead resided. Vile man cannot bear contempt. Let us, as Christians, learn to bear it. Behold, here is the pattern. Let us take this yoke upon us, and our souls shall be at rest.

SECTION LXXVIII.

Chap. xxiii. ver. 12—26.

BARABBAS PREFERRED TO JESUS.

12. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

13. And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

14. Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:

15. No, nor yet Herod: For I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

Herod and Pilate, though they themselves were wicked men, both despised and vilified Christ, and we may suppose would have been forward to condemn him, if they had found the least cause for it, yet were restrained by a secret

providence from joining with their accusers. As it was necessary that he should not suffer under the imputation of any real crime, so the Evangelists are particularly careful to free him from it; and nothing could do this more effectually than the testimony and opinion of two such judges. “And, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him,”—Nothing that amounts to a condemnation of him; or, nothing has been done *by him* (*πεπραγμένον αὐτῷ*) that deserves death, that is, in the judgment of Herod.

16. I will therefore chastise him, and release him.

Chastise him, to give some satisfaction to the Jews: release him, to satisfy his own conscience.

17. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)

18. And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas :

19. (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)

20. Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.

21. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.

The will of God for our salvation was in that cry, though their sin was not the less. What an instance is here of his bringing good out of evil!

22. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.

Pilate asked the question thrice, “What evil hath he done?” to give all possible assurance of his innocence, and he seems to have condemned him at last with the greatest reluctance.

23. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.

24. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.

He condemned himself; and stands upon record for ever as an unjust judge, giving sentence against his own conscience.

25. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

26. And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

O most merciful Lord God Almighty! what do we here see? Jesus so faint and weary that he could not bear his cross any longer himself!

SECTION LXXIX.

Chap. xxiii. ver. 27—38.

THE COMPASSION OF JESUS.

27. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

28. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

29. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

So great were the calamities which were soon to come on the Jews for their wickedness. And yet they were only the miseries of this world.

30. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

As we are told the wicked will do, but with ten thousand times greater terror and amazement, at the day of judgment. Rev. vi. 16.

31. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry ?

Some, who abound in the fruits of righteousness, and suffer only for the sins of others, what shall then the end be of all those, who, as dry trees, are fit for nothing but to be burned ?

32. And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

33. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

The place was loathsome and unsightly, on account of the skulls and bones which were there. They crucified him also amid malefactors, as if his shameful death was not abasement enough, unless every possible circumstance of disgrace was added to it. See, O man, what thy sin did ; and take heed that it be not found upon thee at the last.

34. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

The meaning is not, forgive them without repentance ; but, give them space for it. And Christ's prayer prevails for this, otherwise they must have been given up to their doom without delay. Perhaps we owe every day's respite of our lives to Christ's intercession for us, that we may not die without repentance, and complete forgiveness. Let us improve the mercy of every day that is given us, lest he beg no more for us, and we be either taken out of the world, or given up to the hardness of our hearts.

34. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

35. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others ; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

This very thing which they thought could never happen to Christ, proved him to be so. Every one is as blind who sets up his own reason and self-will against Christ, and tells him as plainly what he should, or should not do.

36. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar.

37. And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

38. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

What Pilate wrote in derision, is a blessed truth to *us*. He was, in a sense of which Pilate thought not, a spiritual King, having salvation for all true Israelites, and reigning in their hearts.

SECTION LXXX.

Chap. xxiii. ver. 39—49.

CHRIST'S DEATH.

39. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

40. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41. And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

43. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

In rest and happiness; perhaps complete; perhaps not, till the resurrection. Who knows? We learn from this instance of the penitent thief, that a true confession of Christ is never too late; and from all the rest of the scriptures, that it cannot be too soon. It may be worth our attention to consider the particulars of this conversion.

He feared God,—confessed his guilt,—owned Christ's righteousness, and kingdom,—and believed in him for his mercy. This man knew everything. What he said is just the right and true way of coming to God by Christ.

44. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

45. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

The sun was rendered dark, as a sign to the Jews, and to future ages; for this preternatural darkness was observed, and recorded in other parts of the earth. But was it not also intended to augment the horrors which Christ felt in his soul? “And the veil of the temple was rent in the midst;” as a sign that the Jewish dispensation was at an end, and the way to God open to all mankind.

46. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

Every Christian commends his spirit to his heavenly Father, and breathes out his last with these words. He gave up the ghost of his own accord. All was finished; he had no more to do in the world, and by as a great miracle as any he had wrought, he now spoke the breath out of his body.

47. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

Here is another testimony to his innocence. And mark that following Christ is glorifying God.

48. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

49. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

They were filled with amazement at what had taken place. We may well be astonished at the love of Jesus Christ in thus dying for us. May that love constrain us to devote ourselves entirely to his worship and service. Amen.—*Edit.*

SECTION LXXXI.

Chap. xxiii. ver. 50—56.

CHRIST'S BURIAL.

50. And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just :

51. (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them ;) he was of Arimathæa, a city of the Jews : who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.

52. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

Out of respect to him, and that his sacred body might not be laid among those of malefactors. We may also suppose that he did this in belief of his resurrection, and that his boldness was the effect of his faith. Certainly Joseph did not think that all his hopes were buried with Christ.

53. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

54. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.

55. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.

56. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments ; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.

This circumstance of the women's resting, shows the importance of not pleading necessity for labouring on the sabbath day, even when persons are dead, and are shortly to be buried.—*Edit.*

We have now seen the concluding scene of the life of the blessed Jesus ; in which he perfected his obedience, by dying an accursed death upon the cross, and offering himself a sacrifice for the sin of the world. This death is the great point at which all Scripture looks. In this the cere-

monies, sacrifices, and prophecies of the Old Testament, were completed, and the love of God to mankind fully manifested. To this we should look, both with deep abhorrence of ourselves, and hearts full of gratitude; remembering that we have, and could only have, redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

Happy are they who look continually with the eye of faith on him whom they have pierced; and in this belief purge themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God. If we mistake here we lose all. For Christ died for us that he might live in us. And we cannot be Christians, and his disciples,—we can have no benefit in his death, nor joy in believing, no peace and fellowship with God, no hope of salvation, if we do not unfeignedly give up ourselves to him for the purification of our hearts unto obedience, as well as the remission of sins. Without this, all our reading and hearing of Christ is no better than an idle tale. The gospel of our salvation is pardon and acceptance with God, for Christ's sake; salvation through him alone, from first to last, and not from our own merits, when we have done all we can, and the very best we can. This is our true ground and christian comfort, and crown of rejoicing. But then, salvation by him, is present salvation, not only from the guilt, but the power of sin; and every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure, knowing that the same scripture which grounds us upon Christ for peace with God, and eternal life, as expressly assures us that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

SECTION LXXXII.

Chap. xxiv. ver. 1—12.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

1. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morn-
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ing, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

They, doubtless, came with some degree of hope concerning his resurrection; but with a great mixture of fear and doubting. They could not altogether forget what he had told them of his rising again, and yet it was so strange an event that they did not know how to believe it. We have reason to consider whether our adherence to Christ, and love of him, are not less than theirs, though we have all possible assurance of his resurrection, and receive it as a chief article of our faith.

2. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

3. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

4. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

5. And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

6. He is not here, but is risen. Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

O this word, *Remember!* We want nothing else to make us Christians. What do we remember of that which Christ has said to us? What care do we take to imprint it on our memories? How can we fail to forget our souls?

7. Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

8. And they remembered his words,

These remarks of Jesus caused them to remember with deep impression, and the joy of faith.

9. And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

10. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

Shepherds were the first preachers of Christ's birth, and

women the first publishers of his resurrection. If any are poor and unlearned, here is comfort for such. The power of God is power in all; and all are blind and foolish, in the matter of their salvation, without it.

11. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

This was strange, considering how plainly, and how often, Christ had told them of his rising again. But their slowness of belief tends to raise our assurance.

12. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

Peter probably had his mind so filled with thoughts of his denial of Jesus, as to have forgotten his promise that he would rise from the dead. This may teach us that whenever we sin, and lose our confidence in the love and favour of the Lord, we are incapacitated from reaping benefit from the events of God's providence, which is bringing about his purposes of mercy toward us.—*Edit.*

SECTION LXXXIII.

Chap. xxiv. ver. 13—32.

JESUS APPEARS TO TWO DISCIPLES ON THEIR WAY TO EMMAUS.

13. And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

14. And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

They talked of what was uppermost in their minds, and warm upon their hearts. They were prepared for Jesus, and he was ready for them.

15. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

When the discourse is of Christ, he is always one of the company.

16. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

If we do not see some particular things relating to Jesus Christ at once, let us not be discouraged. If we are in earnest with him, and wait *his* time, we shall be no losers by this delay. If he makes us delay, it is only to draw from us one answer after another, as he did from them, for our greater benefit, and to make sure work with our souls.

17. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad ?

Christ did not need to be informed, but to suit his instructions to their answers, and to enlighten their understandings by degrees. Christ remarked their sadness, and saw that this was an excellent ground to build upon. Deep seriousness, or inward trouble, is the way to rest ; and such he invites to come to him.

18. And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days ?

19. And he said unto them, What things ? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people :

20. And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

21. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel ; and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done.

22. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre ;

23. And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

24. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

This whole narrative is beautifully plain, simple, and pathetic.—*Edit.*

25. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

They had told Jesus all their minds, and now it was his turn to speak. Let us speak our minds to him, and we shall assuredly have an answer of instruction and comfort from him. “O fools!” This may justly be said of us, if we are ignorant, and slow of belief. We have the advantage of them in several respects. They had only the Scriptures of the Old Testament: we have both the Old Testament Scriptures, and also those of the New Testament; and one is the key to the other.

He charges them with slowness of heart to believe. Observe the root of all unbelief. Wherever we look for it, or whatever we pretend as the cause of it, it is nowhere but in the heart. If we had better hearts, we should have better heads. We have no liking to the things to be believed, and this of course makes us unwilling to believe, and grope for light at noon-day.

26. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27. And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Who would not wish to have heard him expound? Why have not we? What else has he been doing throughout the gospel? If not the very same things, yet what is fully as profitable to us!

28. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

This he did to try them, whether or not they would be so content to part with him. Many sincere Christians find this, and think Christ is about to leave them. But he has

no such design, whatever show he makes, and he loves to be held fast.

29. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

He never refuses this to any man. He is ready to take up his abode with us. O that we were able to make our hearts speak! Do we desire it? O that we all loved our Bibles, and did not let them lie dusting upon our shelves. Christ is there, and will be with us in them.

30. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

Is Christ not known of us, when he blesses, and breaks the bread to us in the sacrament?

31. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him;

And are not our eyes opened, when we see him there with the eye of faith, and feed upon him with a true hunger and thirst? On the other hand, we may ask, are they truly opened till then?

31. And he vanished out of their sight.

By this they had full proof who he was. Nevertheless he had left himself in their hearts, and was not gone from them, though they saw him no more with their eyes.

32. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?

This was a blessed experience to which they allude. Has he lost the power or the will, to open them to *us*, and to make our hearts burn within us? Alas! we read the Scripture but seldom; and when we do, we too seldom, if ever, offer, and open our hearts to *him* in the reading of it. We do not love what it contains. Our affections are otherwise engaged; and therefore it is no wonder that they are so cold and unmoved at the glad tidings of salvation which it brings us. O Jesus! thou still talkest with us in thy

word ; speak it to our hearts, that they may burn within us, and rejoice in thy holy comforts.

SECTION LXXXIV.

Chap. xxiv. ver. 33—45.

CHRIST APPEARS THE SAME NIGHT TO HIS APOSTLES.

33. And they, [*i. e.* the disciples at Emmaus,] rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

34. Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

35. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

He blessed the bread, but vanished at the word,
And left them both exclaiming, 'Twas the Lord!
Did not our hearts feel all he deigned to say?
Did they not burn within us by the way?

Cowper.—Edit.

46. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

What peace? Answer, the peace of God. To them only? Nay, but to us also. It is Christ's precious legacy to the world: it lies open to all in the New Testament, and will be wrought into the hearts of all who seek after it, by his Spirit, in degrees more or less, so as to be a ground of comfort, and of willing, faithful obedience. The whole gospel is in this word, peace; but then the way to it is through repentance. Did a conviction of the truth ever make this peace welcome to us? Let us confess the truth.

37. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

38. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

32. Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

40. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.

To this St. John alludes in his first epistle. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life."—*Edit.*

41. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

42. And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honey-comb.

43. And he took it, and did eat before them.

Their joy was so great, that in the first rapture of it, they could hardly believe what they saw. Therefore to convince them farther, that it was he himself, risen from the dead, with his own real body, he calls for meat to eat before them.

44. And said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

Here Christ gives his sanction to the whole, and every part of the Old Testament, under the threefold division of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, which last stood at the head of the Hagiographa, or third division.

45. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.

They are never understood without Christ's opening; and his opening of them is to the heart. O let us pray for this! A little knowledge there will do great things.

SECTION LXXXV.

Chap. xxiv. ver. 45—53.

CHRIST'S CHARGE, PROMISE, AND ASCENSION.

46. And [he] said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day :

47. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

We may ask ourselves, did Christ know for what he came into the world? Let us think with deep concern of these two points, repentance, and remission of sins, and that one is in order to the other. Let us think how dearly the grace of remission was purchased for us; and what a desperate condition of wilful blindness, and contempt of Christ, those are in, who do not seek carefully after it. Let us observe, too, in whose name, and for whose sake, we have remission. We must ground ourselves wholly upon Christ for it, and the deepest repentance, if it does not bring us to him, is in vain.

“Beginning at Jerusalem:” that wicked, devoted, wretched place, reeking with his blood. Begin *there*, says Christ; to teach us that the greatest sinners, who at the call of God repent, and turn to him, need not despair of forgiveness.

48. And ye are witnesses of these things.

That is, of Christ, as the Saviour of the world, and the way to him, as here described.

49. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry you in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

They were to wait for the Holy Spirit, to enable them to bear their testimony. And till then they were not to enter upon their office. “God be merciful to me a sinner.”*

* See the account of Mr. Adam's conversion in his Memoir.

50. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

He blessed them, not for themselves only, but for the work's sake, that it might prosper in their hands. That blessing reaches to the end of the world, and it is now upon us, if we have put ourselves in the way of receiving it.

51. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

There Jesus is now, and he is now looking down upon us, to see what we are doing in the world. He is also there carrying on the work of our salvation.

52. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy :

This joy arose from what they had, and from what they expected ; namely, Christ's blessing and presence in their souls, God's favour, the promise of the Holy Spirit, and the hope of eternal life. The joy of the Christian is real joy.

52. And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

The Gospels contain the history of Christ's birth, miracles, preaching, death, and resurrection ; to the end that we might believe in him, as the Son of God, and the Saviour of men. Some of the Evangelists are more full in certain of these particulars, and some in others ; but all agree in giving a full relation of his death ; and when they come to close their Gospels, join, as it were, in full concert. The death of Christ, as a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, is the great article of our faith. But in order to establish it, it was necessary that he should rise from the dead. As he was delivered for our offences, so he must be raised again for our justification, to convince us that God accepted his atonement and sacrifice of himself

for us; and as the principal ground, or argument of that faith in him, by which we are justified. This therefore is confirmed to us beyond doubt. All the four Evangelists give in their testimony to it. The Apostles, at first slow of belief in this matter, but afterwards convinced by the evidence of their senses, made it the ground of their preaching: and at the last sealed the truth of it with their blood. But what is this now to us, more than the history of any other person, without a believing application of what he did and suffered, to ourselves? To what purpose are we told of his coming into the world, his doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension, if we are not persuaded by all this to come unto God by him, in the way he has marked out for us, namely, by repentance to faith, and by faith to newness of obedience? Therefore let us know the truth. The death and resurrection of Christ, yea, Christ himself is ours, when we come to him in faith, and longing for his benefits. But we can have no such desire, no faith in him, no benefit from him, till we know, every one of us, from our own miserable, helpless, undone state, how necessary a relief he is to us.

May the Lord grant that we may conclude our reading, as St. Luke does his Gospel, watching unto prayer, praising and blessing God for what we have heard, and for our conversion to the faith of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Note at the end of chap. xxi.

In this chapter Christ has foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, with such circumstances as must have operated strongly to the conversion of many, who lived to see them exactly fulfilled. That destruction is a standing monument of God's hatred of sin, and will to punish it. This is a point in which mankind at all times are slow of belief. Though the scripture abounds with plain declarations, warnings, and examples, of God's punishment of sin and sinners, they will not believe in him, as he has revealed himself; but

walk on still in darkness, and fancy him to be all mercy, in opposition to his justice. But take heed, O Christian, lest he also spare not thee; lest a double portion of woe fall upon thee for the abuse of thy name and profession. For he changeth not; he is the same sin-hating God for ever and ever; and there is a day coming, which will be infinitely more dreadful to all the workers of iniquity than his wrath upon Jerusalem, great and terrible as it was. One is a type, forerunner, and pledge of the other; that we may know what God will do from what he has done,—be in pain for ourselves,—avoid the misery hanging over our heads, and be prepared by repentance and faith, to meet our Lord with joy, at his second coming.

Note on verse 19, chap. xxii.

“This is my body.” They could not think that the bread which Christ held in his hand, and reached out to them, was that very body which they saw at the table with them, but the sign of it; just as the Paschal-lamb is called the Passover, that is, the memorial or token of it. But what then was signified by it? His body broken for us, and received into us. And when we have it in us, (namely, in our souls, —*Edit.*) by a true eating of the sacramental bread in faith, we are free from condemnation, and in the sight of God as Christ himself.

ST. JOHN.

SECTION I.

Chap. i. ver. 1—5.

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST ASSERTED.

1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

“In the beginning,” at the creation, that is, before all time, and from eternity, then was “the Word,” the only-begotten Son of God, so called, because the nature and will of God, what he is in himself, what he does, and would have us do, are manifested by him, as words discover and exactly represent the hidden sense of the mind, which would otherwise be unknown. “And the Word was with God,” and therefore a distinct person. *With Him*, in the distinction and relation of a Son to the Father, though one in substance and essence. “And the Word was God” No art, device, or subtlety of man, can set aside this divine declaration, and full assertion of the eternal God-head of the Word, or Son.

2. The same was in the beginning with God.

To prevent all mistake, or evasion, and that this great truth of our religion, on which so much depends, might be more attended to, and more surely believed, St. John was directed to repeat the declaration.

3. All things were made by him ; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Here the same truth is asserted in the form of a proof, and under a new discovery of divine revelation. "He that made all things is God:" Heb. iii. 4; therefore Christ is God. The evangelist has told us what Christ is in himself ; he next tells us what he is, and must be, to us.

4. In him was life ; and the life was the light of men.

He was the root and the fountain of life to all intellectual beings, communicating happiness to them, through himself, in and with their creation. "And the life was the light of men." His life in them, so long as they retained it, was a never-failing spring of light to them, by which they were fitted to know, and live in communion with God, as much as we are fitted by our bodily eyes to receive and enjoy the light of the sun.

5. And the light shineth in darkness ; and the darkness comprehended it not.

It shineth continually, notwithstanding that men were turned from it by the fall "of man, derived from the sin of our first parents in paradise," and would not receive it. See what our condition is at all times without Christ. Though we should have all the natural knowledge and acuteness in the world, we are in gross darkness till we have the true light again, by his life in us, a root and growth in him, by an inward work of faith. "And the darkness comprehended it not;" that is, did not, would not perceive, or apprehend it ; mankind did not perceive it from the beginning, when, according to these words, it was working in secret ; nor the Jews in particular, when it shone out at his coming ; neither do the generality apprehend it at any time.

In the early part of this chapter what Christ is, and what he came into the world to perform, is set forth. The

design he came upon was the recovery of lost mankind, and to convince us of the will of God for our restoration, and that none but God could effect it ; hence, the Godhead of Christ, the author of it, is declared as fully and plainly as possible. How low have we fallen, how great is our danger, and how great the love of God for us perishing creatures ! Well would it be for us, if we were so struck with the sense of our condition, the mercy of deliverance, and the greatness of our Redeemer, as to receive the life which he offers to us, by receiving him into our hearts. Let us be all attention. The words of this Gospel came from heaven ; they were given to St. John for *us*. Let us make them our own by diligent study, by meditation, and especially by prayer. The lifting up the heart to God, when Christians hear or read the Scripture, is a sure means to have it savingly opened and applied.

SECTION II.

Chap. i. ver. 6—14.

CHRIST'S HUMANITY AND OFFICE.

6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

The office of John the Baptist was two-fold, he was a preacher of repentance, and a witness of Christ. The former is mentioned by the other three Evangelists, the latter by St. John. We must receive Christ in both respects. The repentance which John the Baptist preached is necessary, but Christ alone is our remedy.

8. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

He was not the light which we all need, but a guide to it : this is all which any preacher, or outward teaching of

the word of God, can become to us. If we stop short of Christ, we are still in darkness.

9. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

What the light of the day is to the body, and the business of this world, the same Christ is to the soul, and to all spiritual uses. What should we think of a man, who was blind and would not have his eyes opened, or who was in a dark dungeon, and would not come out of it? But this is nothing to the folly of those who reject Christ, and his light. Think whether you have received it or not, or how any can receive it but under a feeling of want, and a sense of their miserable darkness.

10. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

The Son of God was in the world at all times, and before his coming in the flesh, and he did not then begin to be, for "the world was made by him."

We are in this verse given to understand that the world might have known Christ by an inward work upon their hearts, if it had not been their own fault. This is indeed the only true knowledge of Christ, without which the outward knowledge of him, whether in the flesh, or since, is nothing. The world is still the world.

11. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

Either his own world, and workmanship; or, most probably, his own covenanted people, the Jews, who were sealed his by circumcision, as we are, by baptism, and the outward profession of Christianity: but it is in vain to us, as well as it was to them, if we do not receive him. The words, *his own*, carry a black mark of ingratitude in them.

12. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

By the grace of remission, and a similitude of nature, he

conferred on them both the power and the right ; and thus they were entitled to all the blessings of well-beloved children, plainly implying that they were not so before, and that none can be so but by him ; and farther, he tells us how they are so : “ To them that believe on his name ;” who receive him as their God and Saviour, their life and light, sole relief, and whole salvation. Gal. iii. 26. “ For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

13. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Believers were “ not born of blood,” however noble, nor by natural generation, even from Abraham : nor were they “ born of the will of the flesh,” which would never desire this heavenly birth : nor “ of the will of man,” which could not attain to it : “ but of God.” By his power and will, bringing us into a new state, by a new birth, as much as when we first came into being out of nothing. Every natural man, without divine grace, is as much dead to God, as a dead body is to the world.

14. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The apostles beheld his glory in his miracles, preaching, and conversation, and especially, at his baptism and transfiguration ; and still most of all, in his grace and converting power.

SECTION III.

Chap. i. ver. 15—27.

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN.

15. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me : for he was before me.

Jesus was preferred to John, infinite degrees, in dignity, and glory. It is a blessed thing to have this witness in ourselves, and cry joyfully, this is He.

16. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

Whatever we are, or have, is from his fulness; it is not our own, we have received it. "And grace for grace." That is, grace upon grace, grace of all kinds; the grace of remission, the grace of holiness, the grace of eternal acceptance with God. Can this be our own work, or merit?

17. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

The law had no grace in it, but death and a curse for every transgression; the law was only a shadow of good things to come. But all grace needed by sinful man, and the full performance of God's truth in all his promises, came by Jesus Christ.

18. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

And therefore all other knowledge of him is false, or insignificant. We could as soon make a world, as know him of ourselves; but if we cleave to Christ's knowledge of God, it is the same as if we had it from our own sight.

19. And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

20. And he confessed, and denied not: but confessed, I am not the Christ.

21. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

They expected that Elias himself would come in person before Christ, according to Malachi iv. 5: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." John said, he was not Elias in this sense, though in another he was, as coming

in the spirit and power of Elias. The Scripture is all for life and power; and without this, Elias, if he had come himself, would have done them no good. John is asked if he was the prophet spoken of by Moses, in the book of Deuteronomy xviii. 15—18.

22. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

If this question were put to us, one by one, what should we say? Are we Christians, and children of God, by repentance, faith, and conversion, or not?

23. He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

We have heard who Christ is, even the Lord God, and that our life and salvation come with him. How long shall we not prepare?

24. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

25. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

They intimated by this question that he took too much upon himself. In answer to which he tells them, that his baptism, of itself, could do them but little good, and was for a farther end, namely, in order to Christ, whose unworthy servant he was, and who alone had power to help them.

26. John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not:

Can this be said of *us*? Have we the Scriptures before us, is Christ preached to us continually, and do we not know him?

27. It is he, who, coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose

SECTION IV.

Chap. i. ver. 28—37.

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN.

28. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world !

The lamb appointed, and accepted of God, and of whom the daily sacrifice, and paschal-lamb, were only figures, or prophecies. “ Which taketh away the sin of the world :” ours, and the sin of every man born into the world. This one saying of Scripture is worth the whole world. And the meaning is, that if our sin is not thus taken away, it will remain in full force against us for ever. Behold, therefore, the Lamb of God, taking up the sin of all, and bearing the heavy load of it in his own body ; but let us remember that nothing but a sense of our guilt can induce us to turn our eyes to Christ. So long as we have one excuse for ourselves, we shall never look to the Lamb of God. Earnest longing, and humble looking, do all. Who can fathom the depth of this expression, or say how far the virtue of this sacrifice extends ?

30. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me : for he was before me.

31. And I knew him not : but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

32. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33. And I knew him not : but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

John says that he did not know him, as the Christ, the Son of God, ver. 34. It may seem strange that John should never have known Christ, as such, before his baptism, considering what is related in Luke i. Doubtless, there was an over-ruling providence in it, that his testimony might have the greater weight, by being given him at the instant, from above. "The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost:" verily, no other baptism, without this, will profit us; and we are plainly told that this is one great end of our being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Acts ii. 38.

34. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

And nothing less can be all we want, to deliver us from sin, and to bring us to God. What has he done, what do we desire he should do for us, and to what end do we believe in him as the Son of God?

35. Again the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples;

36. And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

This is the third time of John's bearing witness to Jesus, and the second time of his bearing witness to him as "the Lamb of God." Let not this be repeated to us in vain. Let us remember the sin of the world, and that it can be forgiven in no other way. Whenever we feel sin as a burden, to hear that God has appointed such a way for the pardon of it, will be joyful news to us.

37. And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

They heard John with effect, they believed. We hear in this gospel John's preaching; what do we resolve on? Are we resolved to follow Jesus without delay, as they did, or not? All is told us for this end. Let us pray, pray sincerely, for the feeling heart, and then we shall have the hearing ear. Let us follow Jesus; where else shall we have one happy moment?

John, by his baptizing, preaching, and manner of life, had drawn the eyes of all upon him; and the Jews therefore, who expected the coming of the Messiah about that time, sent some of the Pharisees, who were persons of note and authority, as messengers, to inquire into his character and pretensions. In answer to which John tells them what he was, and particularly that he was not the Christ; but his messenger, forerunner, and witness, and the person sent to point him out to others. To Christ then we must go; and happy will it be for us if John the Baptist brings us to him by his testimony, and through his ministry of repentance.

SECTION V.

Chap. i. ver. 38—42.

THE CALLING OF JOHN, ANDREW, AND PETER.

38. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?

We may hence learn, that the moment we look and turn to Christ, he sees, and turns to us. "What seek ye?" He knew, but would have them speak. He is always pleased to hear us tell our wants. What then does each of us want from him? Till we know this we cannot follow him.

38. They say unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

This was saying and meaning, a great deal. They owned him as their Master and Teacher, and desired to be with him. We call him Master, and Lord, and yet, alas! too frequently, we do not care how little we learn from him, or have of his company.

39. He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw

where he dwelt, and abode with him that day; for it was about the tenth hour.

As he said to them, so, in effect, he says to all; “Come and see.” Come, and you *shall* see, whatever you can desire. But *come*, is a hard word. Come as an undone sinner, sounds heavily in our ears.

These disciples, probably John, the writer of this gospel, and Andrew, came and found such sweetness in him that their souls were knit to him ever after. Let us not think in our hearts that it might be so with us, if we were to have a sight of him, and hear him speak. We *do* hear him in his word, and he is always in, and with it, to make it effectual.

40. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.

41. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

Andrew made it his business to find Peter. He could not keep what he had found, to himself. This was brotherly kindness indeed!

He told him that he and John had found Messiah, and in him he afterwards learnt that they found all that sinful man wanted; forgiveness, a new heart, and a sure title to heaven. This was a happy finding, and it is recorded to put us upon a careful seeking. Let us not deceive ourselves; one is not to be expected without the other.

42. And he brought him to Jesus.

Let each of us, first, bring himself to Jesus, and then we shall endeavour to bring others to him.

42. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, A stone.

He knew Simon, called him by his name, and told him what he would be, (firm as a rock,) before Simon knew

anything of him. He knows this hour what we are, whether friends or foes, and it behoves us greatly to know ourselves.

SECTION VI.

Chap. i. ver. 43—51.

PHILIP AND NATHANAEL CALLED.

43. The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

Jesus proceeded to enter upon his ministry: he *would* go forth, that is, his whole will was to the work. He found Philip, and he must find us; and it is our fault if we are not found of him. Jesus commanded Philip to follow him as a disciple; probably, not yet as an apostle. We may assure ourselves that this is a call to every one of us.

44. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

45. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

See how forward they are to spread the good news, and how it runs from one to another.

46. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?

The fact gives the answer, yes; the best good thing that ever was in the world. How would Nathanael be ashamed of his weak saying, when he knew how ready Jesus was to acknowledge the little good that was in *him*!

46. Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

And accordingly he went to see with his own eyes. Our knowledge of Christ must be our own proper knowledge.

Hearing of him, without going to him ourselves, is nothing.

47. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile !

The meaning is not, in whom there is no sin ; for there never was a man upon earth without guile. But Christ knew him to be sincere, that he would immediately give up all his prejudice, and acknowledge the truth.

48. Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me ? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.

Perhaps under strong, and very sincere workings of mind concerning Christ. We know that we are always before his all-seeing eye. The best thing we can do for ourselves, under this conviction, is to be always thinking that his eye is upon us.

49. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God ; thou art the king of Israel.

Here is the proof of Nathanael's sincerity ; and whatever we think of ourselves, we have none till we make this confession. It is not to be with the mouth only ; away with this common deceit.

50. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou ? thou shalt see greater things than these.

This is the experience of every true Christian. He is always improving and coming to the sight and knowledge of greater things.

51. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

They would soon have a proof, by the power attending his ministry, that heaven was open to him. We have a good warrant for carrying this farther. The angels of

God minister to every son of man, who is an heir of salvation. Heb. i. 14.

SECTION VII.

Chap. ii. ver. 1—11.

CHRIST TURNETH WATER INTO WINE.

1. And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee ; and the mother of Jesus was there.

The third day is spoken of with reference to the circumstances last mentioned in the former chapter.

2. And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

Christ made them sufficient recompense for the respect they showed him, not only by supplying them with wine, but by the miracle leading them to a higher knowledge of himself. We may observe that Jesus was no discourager of feasting at proper times ; of all excess we are sure he was. His business was everywhere, and he was always intent upon it, and knew what use to make of every occasion for the good of others.

3. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

She might say this by a divine impulse ; or, to make trial of him, knowing his time was at hand, and supposing what he would do.

4. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee ? mine hour is not yet come.

The word woman sounds rather harsh to us, but with the Jews it was a more civil appellation. “What have I to do with thee ?” Though, in other things, he was subject to his parents, Luke ii. 51 ; yet in what concerned his office, he knew not Mary as a mother. How absurdly

do the papists pray to her to *command her son*, when she neither hears them, nor ever had any command over him in the things of God. This is our example in like cases. Nay, we are positively commanded to hate father and mother, or disregard them as much as if we did, when they would turn us from God. “Mine hour is not yet come,” of entering publicly on my ministry. At verse the twelfth, it is said, “After this he went down to Capernaum,” when he entered solemnly on his ministry, not before, as we learn from Matt. iv. 12—17; Mark i. 14; Luke iv. 14.

5. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

Hear what Mary saith. We shall be no losers by doing whatsoever he bids us.

6. And there were set there six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

These were for their accustomed washings, in which they were very scrupulous. Mark vii. 2—5.

7. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

Either for a more plentiful supply of wine, as a sign that Christ was about to fill and exhilarate them with his gifts, who should believe in him; or, that the vessels being full, the water might be more easily seen, and the change of it into wine might admit of no doubt.

8. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

9. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water which was made wine, and knew not whence it was; (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

10. And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine: and when men are well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

We are to observe, that these words, “Thou hast kept

the good wine until now," were spoken by the governor, or orderer of the feast, and not by Christ. It would be an horrible abuse of this passage of scripture, to suppose that Christ gives any, the least encouragement, to long sitting at the table, or much drinking. His aim, in all he did, was heavenly; and what it was on this occasion we are told in the next verse.

11. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory: and his disciples believed on him.

The great end which Jesus had in working his miracles, was to manifest his glory, that his disciples, and all others might believe on him. But in vain do we read of this, or of any other of his miracles, if we do not come to him for our own conversion. This he must effect, and it is as great a change as that of turning water into wine. Let us remember therefore that every miracle which he wrought, is both a proof of his ability to help *us*, and a call to us to receive our *cure* from him. Till we read the Bible in this view, and see ourselves in this light, it can be no more to us than any other book. Has Christ made a beginning with us? Are we in his hands for healing? This is the great question, in which our souls are concerned.

It seems as if this miracle, which was antecedent to Christ's public ministry, or, as it may be called, a miracle out of its course, was wrought merely for the sake of his disciples, among whom were some of the apostles. He could set no value upon a faith unsupported by reason, and did not intend they should believe in him, as the Christ, without sufficient ground; and whatever they saw in him was insufficient for this end, without the attestation of a miracle.

SECTION VIII.

Chap. ii. ver. 12—17.

CHRIST PURGETH THE TEMPLE.

12. After this he went down to Capernanm, he, and his mother and his brethren, and his disciples : and they continued there not many days.

13. And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

14. And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money, sitting :

These persons, mentioned in the thirteenth verse, furnished those who came to the passover with sacrifices and offerings, and money for their occasions. This was a goodly pretence, and doubtless they had enough to say for themselves. All their excuses were nothing to Christ ; the temple, even the outer court of it, where they were, must at no rate be profaned.

15. And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen ; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables ;

We are here to observe the divine power which attended him ; for otherwise his scourge of small cords, or rushes, would never have driven them out.

16. And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence, make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

Nor anything else but an house of prayer. No worldly thoughts of any kind must enter there.

17. And the disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house has eaten me up.

This is written in Psalm the sixty-ninth, and the ninth verse. Every one who has a measure of Christ's spirit and temper, will have a suitable zeal and reverence for the place of God's worship.

SECTION IX.

Chap. ii. ver. 18—25.

CHRIST FORETELS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

18. Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things ?

The action itself was a sign, or miracle ; but that they overlooked ; as men do at all times what they have no mind to see, especially where their gains are concerned.

19. Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

At the same time Christ probably pointed to his body.

20. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days ?

21. But he spake of the temple of his body.

His body was indeed the habitation of the Godhead. Col. ii. 9. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily." As we are told our bodies are habitations of God ; so if we are Christians, we shall reverence them accordingly, and as God's most sacred temples, keep them in purity and chastity. 1 Cor. vi. 19. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost ?" 2 Cor. vi. 16. "For ye are the temple of the living God."

22. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them ; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

They clearly understood this saying, and more firmly believed the scriptures which related to his resurrection. It was hardly possible that they should have such a knowledge and belief of it, as they had afterwards, and as we have now. God has a perfect knowledge of the means which all have for knowing and believing, and he will judge them accordingly.

23. Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed on his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

They were astonished at his miracles, and could not resist the force of them, but nevertheless they were not sincere, and true believers.

24. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

May not this be our case? We may believe in him to a degree, and own him to be a divine person, but not be such as that he can commit, or give himself to us.

25. And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

He knew what a depth of wickedness there was in man. To whom then must he, who knoweth all men, commit himself? To those who know themselves in some measure as he does, and who commit themselves to him for a change of their state.

SECTION X.

Chap. iii. ver. 1—5.

THE NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH SHOWN.

1. There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

2. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

It was cowardly in him to come to Jesus by night. However, he came, and God prospered his weak beginning. He had boldness afterwards to stand the reproach of the Pharisees while he spoke for Christ. John vii. 50, 51. “Ni-

codemus saith unto them, Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" He also assisted at Christ's burial, when all the disciples had forsaken him. John xix. 39. "And there came also Nicodemus (which at the first came to Jesus by night) and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pounds weight."

Nicodemus argued rightly respecting the miracles which Christ wrought; he inferred that they were a proof of Christ's being sent of God; and indeed they are a proof which nothing can shake, and when duly considered, will keep us close to him, and bear up the soul in all its doubtings. Christ at this time had wrought but few of his miracles, and yet Nicodemus could not withstand the force of them. Only let us remember what he was sent for, and that we believe on him in vain, if we do not come to him for the miracle of our own conversion.

3. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

He cannot belong to his kingdom of grace here, or be received into heaven hereafter. This was taking him into the depth of divine knowledge at once, and showing indeed that he was a teacher come from God, for no man upon earth could have thought that this was the only way to the kingdom of heaven. Did Christ know what was in man, or not? And what can more plainly intimate to us that our first birth is impure and polluted, and that nature however improved, without the grace of the new birth, cannot be fit for heaven?

4. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Here Nicodemus had forgotten the great end of Christ's miracles, which is to teach us to believe without objecting. When once we are convinced of them as being the words

of Christ, reason is struck dumb, and has nothing to do but to submit. And let us observe withal, that which is very common, that Nicodemus added to the words, and choked his belief by a difficulty of his own making. Christ said nothing of entering a second time into the womb.

5. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

He must be washed from the defilement of his birth, by the remission of his sins, in baptism; and made a new man in holiness, and in the inward deep ground of his heart, by the power of the Spirit. He now explains what he meant by being born again; and would not alter what he had said of the necessity of it. Christ repeats for our conviction, that “he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Do we never think of this matter with great concern? Do we never inquire what the new birth is, how it is to be attained, and that if we do not attain it, we perish eternally? The case is plain, we are still unregenerate, notwithstanding our baptism, and only in a fleshly and natural state.

SECTION XI.

Chap. iii. ver. 6—15.

THE NECESSITY AND NATURE OF THE NEW BIRTH.

6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

That which is born of the flesh hath nothing but earthly views, desires, and workings; is too corrupt to enter into the kingdom of God, and cannot mend itself; is blind to

the great disorder, and averse to its cure. This is showing why we must be born again.

“And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit :” has a new nature, with new feelings, appetites, powers, by a divine operation. He can seek after God, live to him, and be happy in him.

7. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

This is said to show that the new birth may be, and that it will prove itself, though we know not the manner of it, namely, by its effects. Just as we know what the wind does, though we neither see it, nor know where it begins or ends.

9. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be ?

Nicodemus would never have said this, if he had taken the new birth only for a figure, or getting a new name and profession, as some do now. In truth, the reality of it is the very thing we want, and nothing else will do us any good.

10. Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things ?

It is plain then that he might have known better from the scriptures of the Old Testament, and what they testify of Christ. Let each of us ask himself, art thou a Christian, and knowest not these things ?

11. Verily, verily I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen ; and ye receive not our witness.

Perhaps we can take Christ's word for this, and believe that he knew what he said of the necessity of a new birth. Let us beware, therefore, that the next words are not said of us ; “and ye receive not our witness.” Our doom is here pronounced, if we do not ; and yet those who do, are

at all times comparatively few. When did we receive this witness? When did this weighty passage of scripture come home to us?

12. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

Though what we are told is enough to try our belief, and as much as we are able to bear, it is but low and earthly in comparison of what might have been told us, and we shall know hereafter.

13. And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

No man hath ascended up to heaven to bring down the knowledge we want; and therefore we can have none, unless we receive it from him, who came from thence, and as to his godhead, was, and is always there. O that we would but know what we might, and know it as we ought!

14. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up;

15. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Here Christ declares what is principally to be understood by the new birth, and tells Nicodemus *how* all are saved; even by looking to him, and believing in his name: as the Israelites, who had been stung, were cured by looking at the brazen serpent, and which we now understand to be an exact type of our healing by Christ. In this place, therefore, and in what follows, Jesus preaches *faith*, and also shows us precisely what it is.

SECTION XII.

Chap. iii. ver. 16—24.

THE EVIL OF UNBELIEF.

16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten

Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Notwithstanding the hatred of the world to God, and its enmity to him, he “so loved it that he gave his only begotten Son,” and he willingly offered himself to be made a curse for sinners. O astonishing, and almost incredible love!

“That whosoever believeth in him,” as given *for* us. Mistake not this. The great thing for salvation, from first to last, is looking at Jesus, and trusting in him. And whosoever does so truly, has Christ given unto him, is a new man by a new birth, and shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

17. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Not to condemn it, according to its deserts, and at that time: “but that the world through him might be saved;” that is, all who pleased, and would receive the offer of salvation, in the way marked out for them. But not otherwise.

18. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

He is in a state of condemnation, whoever he be, and must continue in it, because he will not take the only way to come out of it, by “believing in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

19. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Light is come into the world, to see God, sin, ourselves, and Christ. If we have not the necessary light, let us look nowhere else for the reason of this deficiency but to our evil deeds. It is the evil in ourselves which shuts it out; and this is that which will justify God in our condemnation, and make it heavy.

20. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

All who will not be convinced of evil, nor cease from it—all who will not come into the light of God's truth, as revealed by Christ, have their true ground of conduct here laid open; whatever excuses they make, whatever they think of themselves, in their hearts, they hate the light.

21. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Who is he that doeth truth? The regenerate man; who having come to Christ by faith, walks in the light of it, as under the eye of God. Perhaps, too, here may be a tacit reproof of Nicodemus, and others, for fearing men, when they know the truth.

22. After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judæa; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

This is mentioned by St. John to connect the narrative.—*Edit.*

23. And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

24. For John was not yet cast into prison.

Nothing can be gathered from the Evangelist's remark, that "there was much water there," as to the exclusive mode of immersion, in baptism. The more useful remark will be, that so long as John had his liberty he was indefatigable in preaching repentance, baptizing, and preparing the way to Jesus, whom he pointed out as the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."—*Edit.*

SECTION XIII.

Chap. iii. ver. 25—36.

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY OF CHRIST.

25. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

Probably, the dispute was whose baptism was the better, that of John, or that of Jesus. John's disciples pleaded for the former, and told him with some concern, that his followers forsook him. Let us notice how, like a true servant, he keeps within his own bounds, and sends all to Christ.

26. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

27. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

28. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

His meaning was, that he must not go beyond his commission; and he had none to keep his disciples to himself.

29. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

His joy was to hear Christ, who is the bridegroom of the church, and of every believer. What an honour is this, and how can we think worthily of it! What an endearing relation is that in which he stands to us! What care should we take to preserve so happy a union; to be the bridegroom's friends, as John was, and to have no greater joy than to hear him speaking to us in all the kindness of his word, and warming our hearts with it!

30. He must increase, but I must decrease.

John was willing that it should be so. Christ's faithful servants desire nothing but the increase of his power and influence in the world. Let us see to it, that he increases in *us*, as he will, when we are nothing in our own eyes.

31. He that cometh from above is above all : he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth : he that cometh from heaven is above all.

And therefore more especially to be attended to ; since whatever he teaches is true, pure, heavenly, and of his own infallible knowledge, which is more than can be said of any mere man. "They will reverence my Son." No such thing. Behold, to the shame of mankind, what follows.

32. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth ; and no man receiveth his testimony.

That is, comparatively but few receive it. Let every one put the question to himself, Lord, is it I ? Do I not receive thee upon thy own testimony ?

The next words will tell us when we do.

33. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

That is, he hath a firm belief, and can seal to the truth of his promises, from the life and power of a true faith in himself.

34. For whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God ; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

What is this to us, if we do not receive of his fulness ?

35. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

He hath given all into his hand, to give us, according to our wants, which he is always ready to supply ; and if he does not, it is because we are ignorant of them, and do not desire his gifts.

Observe, God's giving all power to the Son, to govern and bless us, is mentioned as the highest instance of his

love, and the greatest honour he can put upon him. How dear is our salvation to God !

36. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

He that believeth on the Son of God for the remission of sins, and a new will to please God in all holy obedience, "hath everlasting" life already begun in him, and shall have it more abundantly. "And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Here John the Baptist plainly implies that it is upon every man in his natural state, and that it must abide on him for ever, if Christ does not remove it. It is not without cause that so much is said in the gospel of the greatness of the Person whose word we are to take.

SECTION XIV.

Chap. iv. ver. 1—10.

CHRIST MEETS WITH A WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

1. When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

2. (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

There is a twofold work in baptism, outward, and inward. The outward act of baptizing into him must be performed by his ministers ; but he has a higher work, namely, to baptize with the Holy Ghost ; and the former is nothing without the latter.

3. He left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee.

He did this to avoid danger from the Pharisees ; not indeed that he feared it, but because he would not provoke it, before the time.

4. And he must needs go through Samaria.

5. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

6. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

Though Christ was so faint and weary that he could go no further, yet he was patient and contented. This was about the sixth hour, or noon, when probably Jesus was fasting.

7. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

Who can be in a poorer condition than Jesus was? What did he not suffer for our imitation? And how can we complain when we are generally in better circumstances than Christ was, and never in a worse condition?

8. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

9. Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

She wondered, either that he *would* ask; or, how he could expect to be gratified in his request. The cause was an old grudge betwixt the two nations, on account of religion: which to the shame of mankind, inflames their hatred more than anything else. We shall perceive in what follows, that Jesus brought the Samaritans to a better temper. They forgot the Jew, when they found what he was. And if Jesus does not reconcile us in himself to all the world, we mistake him.

10. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

Let us mark the several particulars of this conversation

and, as we proceed, have an eye to ourselves. Happy shall we be, if we see our own case in this woman, and following her step by step in the workings of her mind, come to the same conclusion. She did not at first know what a gift of God Christ was; do we? Let us not think that we do, when we do not; for then we shall never know. Christ let the light of divine truth in upon her sweetly, and by degrees, as she could bear it; but then she was inquisitive, and willing to learn.

He tells her that on her asking, "he would have given her living water;" that which refreshes, supports, and comforts the spiritual life, as drink does the body. This living water, is Christ and all his benefits. Thirsting for him is all. Why do we not ask, but because our souls are athirst for something else, and we feel no want of him?

SECTION XV.

Chap. iv. ver. 11—24.

CHRIST REVEALS HIMSELF TO HER.

11. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

So the soul is apt to question with Christ, and to doubt at first of his power.

12. Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

13. Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

That is, he shall thirst over and over again, and die at last.

14. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him

shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

“ Shall never thirst,” that is, shall never want a supply to quench his thirst ; or, he shall have a never-ending life from it, which does not need to be supported with meat and drink ; as those of whom St. John speaks, Rev. vii. 16, “ They shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more.” Or perhaps the meaning may be, that he shall thirst no more for worldly things and mere earthly comforts. Ease from that tormenting, perpetual thirst is very desirable, and since Christ has it to bestow, we should go to him for the blessing.

15. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

She felt no want of the water of which Christ spoke, and therefore did not understand him. Observe how he brings her to a knowledge of herself, and opens a way into her heart.

16. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

This darted into her like lightning. Conscience was alarmed, and would not let her shuffle with him, though she did not know the person with whom she had to do. We know, and yet do not suffer him to bring our secret sins to light, by his word and Spirit.

17. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband :

The woman made a true confession. Now she was fully in God's way. Jesus replies, thou hast spoken the truth, most happily for thyself.

18. For thou hast had five husbands ; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband : in that saidst thou truly.

It is our own fault if Christ does not tell us all. To what purpose is it to think of hiding ourselves from him,

when he knows all? Let us ask ourselves, when did he tell us anything?

19. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

This was the answer he expected. She did not fly in his face for telling her a home truth; but perceiving him to be a prophet, she asks his opinion in a matter which seemed to her of great importance. The Jews had a temple on one mountain, the Samaritans on another, and she wished to know who were in the right. In answer, he tells her plainly, the latter were in the wrong; and withal instructs her how God is to be worshipped: not in one place only, with outward ceremonies, but everywhere, with the heart.

20. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

21. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.

23. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

24. God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

The meaning is not, that there is to be no outward worship under the gospel, but that it avails nothing without the inward; and that whenever we do worship God, it must be as a spirit, with an awful sense of his presence, an inward reverence of his perfections, and the offering up of our hearts to him.

SECTION XVI.

Chap. iv. ver. 25—38.

SHE BELIEVES IN CHRIST.

25. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

26. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

Do we say, we know that Christ *is* come and hath told us all things, and if we are ignorant of anything which it behoves us to know, it is our own fault?—O Jesus! say to us, “I am he!” Speak this to all our hearts!

27. And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

They thought it wrong, she being a Samaritan. We need not however marvel at her; she had a soul to save. The scripture is particularly careful to let us know, in many instances, that the disciples at first were like other men; to the end that we may see in them how great a change Christ can work in us.

28. The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

29. Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?

She was all on fire to carry the good news of the Messiah to them. It is of the nature of christian knowledge to spread itself; and christian experience, when it is lovingly communicated, has greater force upon others, than argument.

It is Christ's way at all times, first to make us know what we are, before he can give himself to us, or make us better. It is a hopeful time with us, when we are willing to know the worst of ourselves. And whenever we are

so willing, we know *too* also who has been working in us.

30. Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

This conversation was revealed to St. John for our sakes, and that we might come to Christ. O that we did, one and all ! That is the happiest hour of our lives, in which we come to Jesus.

31. In the meanwhile his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

32. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

O the hidden life, and spiritual joys of Christ ! The same appetite, the same feast. We want nothing but the mind that was in him to be happy.

33. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat ?

34. Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Let ministers, especially, think whether they are in this mind or not. Let all think what is their great hunger and thirst : and wherein they enjoy themselves most.

35. Say not ye, There are four months, and then cometh harvest ? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields ; for they are white already to harvest.

The harvest was within four months in Judæa, at that time ; and from this circumstance, and probably, seeing the Samaritans coming to him, he takes occasion to turn their thoughts to another harvest, which was then ready for their hands in all corners of the world. The souls of men are Christ's harvest ; and great is his joy when they are brought to him.

36. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal : that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

“ He that reapeth receiveth wages,” according to his

diligence and faithfulness. “He gathered fruit unto eternal life,” for himself, and those who are gathered by him. God grant that the minister of Christ, and his flock, may rejoice together for ever, he for sowing, and they for receiving the seed!

37. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

38. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

The persons who had laboured were prophets and ministers of God, who lived before the time of Christ. The disciples had “entered into their labours,” to complete what they had begun, with no less labour. This harvest is now, has been ever since the time here spoken of, and will continue to the end of the world. Let us consider whether or not we are fit for Christ’s barn. We die either wheat, or chaff.

SECTION XVII.

Chap. iv. ver. 39—45.

CHRIST CONVERTS THE SAMARITANS.

39. And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

It seems, he has nothing to tell *us*. When we are spoken to for this purpose, we say, we do no harm.

40. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

These were willing to learn, who wished him to remain with them to instruct them. He remained as long as he

could. It was a precious time for them, which was improved by many of them, and what they will praise God for to all eternity.

41. And many more believed because of his own word ;

42. And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying : for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

We have a great many of Christ's own words, and, if not the very same, yet the same in substance which he spoke to these Samaritans ; and it is our own fault, if they do not bring us to the acknowledging of him, as the Christ, the Saviour of the world. What they heard did not convert them, merely as coming from his mouth, but as gladly received, and mixed with faith.

43. Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee.

44. For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.

Jesus himself had occasion to testify this. Though a spotless man, in his outward appearance he was but a man ; and they objected especially to the meanness of his birth, and want of learning. What can his servants, who have faults, expect but, to have them thrown in the way of their preaching ?

Let us observe carefully, that he would not stay where he could do but little good. He bears long with a hardened soul, or hardened people, but he knows his time of leaving them.

45. Then when he was come into Galilee, The Galilæans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast : for they also went unto the feast.

The Galilæans entertained him, and listened to his preaching, and some probably received him into their hearts. That is the reception he expects from all, and all he did and taught was for this end.

SECTION XVIII.

Chap. iv. ver. 46—54.

CHRIST HEALS THE RULER'S SON.

46. So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

47. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son : for he was at the point of death.

Let us beseech Christ, and healing will certainly follow. Here is a pattern for us. "He was at the point of death;" here is the trial of our faith. Our case may seem to us to be desperate, but then is Christ's time. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

48. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

The nobleman expected that he would go with him, that he might *see* him heal the child : thinking that the cure could not otherwise be performed.

49. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

As if Christ could heal him with going, but that he could not without. We have always something to plead against a full, unreserved belief of Christ's power.

50. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way ; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

Now he left the cure wholly to Christ in his own way. It is the excellency of faith not to prescribe to Jesus, as to the time or manner of his working.

51. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

52. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

53. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth : and himself believed, and his whole house.

The miracle had its full effect, and was the means of healing all their souls, by leading them to believe in him ; and it is now recorded for our benefit, that we may hear and believe.

54. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judæa into Galilee.

SECTION XIX.

Chap v. ver. 1—9.

CHRIST CURES AN INFIRM MAN.

1. After this there was a feast of the Jews ; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

If this were the feast of Pentecost, as some say, St. John makes mention of three passovers, and then Christ's ministry lasted only a little more than two years. If it was the passover, as others say, then he makes mention of four, and Christ's ministry lasted a little more than three years. "The latter opinion is the more correct one."—*Edit.*

2. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

3. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

These persons afford a true picture of mankind, before their healing by Christ.

4. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and

troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

An illiterate, simple reader of the scriptures, sees nothing here but a miracle. The learned who are indisposed to religion, turn themselves into all shapes to get rid of it. Each one who stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. If God has made no exception, do thou make none in thine own case, O sinner!

5. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

Length of time is no hindrance to Christ's power in our conversion. The difficulty is on the part of man. Generally speaking, the older we are, the more hardened we become in unbelief, and the more averse to a cure.

6. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

Could Christ doubt of this? Is not every one glad of a bodily cure? Where the will to be healed is, opportunity is often wanting. Surely then he asked this question, to put an answer into our mouths for our souls, and to make us understand that he wants nothing else from us but a will to be cured. Let us observe too, that he puts this question to every one of us, as much as if he now stood over us, and says, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Let us feel ourselves sick, and we shall be willing.

7. The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

Observe how he opens his grievance to Christ. The Saviour heeds not how bad the case is, if we will but tell him of it, and implore his aid.

8. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

9. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

He who before could not carry himself could now carry his bed. Who can be more disabled in his soul, than this man was in his body? And who is not *naturally* as much? He who restored him to perfect soundness, can restore *us*; and Christ did not work this miracle upon him only for his own sake, but that we all might come to him for ourselves. Let us see in what manner we are to get the marrow of scripture.

SECTION XX.

Chap. v. ver. 10—20.

THE JEWS FIND FAULT.

10. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath-day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.

11. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

12. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?

13. And he that was healed, wist not who he was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.

We may think, perhaps, that he should rather have stayed to show himself upon the occasion; but Jesus declined popularity for two reasons.

1st, From his humility, and that we might imitate his self-denial.

2dly, He best knew his own time of manifesting himself, and till then he would not expose himself to the malice of the Jews.

14. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

Where did the feet of this man carry him, after he was able to walk? Let none ever say that Christ has made them

whole, if their hearts are not bent towards the place of God's worship.

Sin made this man a cripple, and in more ways than we think of, it plagues us. But for what end does Christ loose us from the bonds of sin, by bestowing upon us forgiveness? Hear it from his own mouth, and let the heavenly instruction sink deep into our souls, if we would not lose his mercy for ever. It is that we may sin no more; that is, live in no known sin.

15. The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole.

He was not afraid to do it: his cure made him speak. It is happy for us when we confess Jesus from our own experience.

16. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath-day.

Sabbath-breaking was death: but this charge against Jesus was only a cover for a persecuting spirit. They never stayed to inquire whether Jesus had broken the sabbath, or not.

17. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

The law of the sabbath is no law to God; and especially, no bar to the continual work of the Father, and the Son, in governing, blessing, and saving mankind. Christ, therefore, instead of directly answering the accusation, takes occasion from it to tell them who, and what he was.

18. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

In what follows, Jesus does not deny this. If the Jews had been mistaken in their inference, he would certainly have told them of their error. The Son of God is as true God, as the son of man is man.

19. Then answered Jesus, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I

say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

Jesus declares that he is intimately united to God the Father, and entirely one with him in all he does. Who could, with truth, make these declarations, or what follows, but God?

20. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

He would show them greater works than such as healing the lame man, even those of restoring the dead to life, as Lazarus and others. Yea, he would raise dead souls to life, and the dead bodies of all at the last day, and would display his power in judging them. He would display in a little time such specimens of his divine power, that they might so wonder, as to be converted.

SECTION XXI.

Chap. v. ver. 21—31.

JESUS SHOWS HIS DIVINITY.

21. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

Christ quickeneth in every sense; to bodily, spiritual, and eternal life. He is still asserting his divinity.

22. For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

Judgment is the essential prerogative of the Godhead.

23. That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

God the Father would have all men know with what authority the Son is invested, that they might honour him, as they do honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, as the Son of God, as God, as sent to quicken, redeem, and save mankind, “honoureth not the Father who hath sent him.” Whoever thinks he does, deceives himself. How can he, who denies the wisdom, resists the will, and despises the grace of the Father, in thmissi on of the Son?

24. Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation : but is passed from death unto life.

He that believes in the Father, as sending Christ. What constitutes a believer? Answer, Hearing Christ’s word, and receiving what he teaches of God, with undisputing simplicity. This is his nature and character; his blessedness follows. He hath everlasting life: a right to it by the promise of God; and he hath it already begun in him, by a new birth of the Holy Spirit. “And shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” Hence we infer that we are in a state of death at the first, and can only know a passing from it by faith in Christ.

25. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

If the words “now is,” are to be strictly taken, the passage must be understood of a resurrection to a spiritual life; in which Christ is the agent, namely, as sending the Holy Spirit: and it is a farther proof of his Godhead. This cannot be the power of a creature. Now is the time for us to hear, and if we do not, we continue in a state of death and condemnation.

26. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.

That is, life in himself essentially; and therefore a power of communicating it, which no creature can, having only a derivative, borrowed life of its own.

27. And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Christ took our nature upon him, and therefore had experience in himself of our temptations, and infirmities. There is both comfort and terror in this. None will be condemned, whose case will admit of favour; and none will have any excuse left, who are condemned by "the Son of man."

28. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

I suppose the stress is to be laid upon the pronoun *his*. *He* it is, who, by his all-powerful voice shall quicken all the countless millions of the dead.

29. And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

This needs nothing but application. Let us think daily, under the impression of this awful truth; and ask ourselves, what are we doing in the world? And let us remember who it is, from whom we have life, or the will and power to believe and be saved. What person is there, who considers the wickedness of some, and the dead carelessness of others, who would think there was such a text in the Bible?

30. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

I can do nothing, as distinct from the Father, but all I do is in union with him, and whatever I do he does; and therefore what pretence can you have for condemning me for what I have done?

31. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.

Christ means, that though it was true in itself, it could not be admitted, being single. Christ did not expect to be received in his own word only, and therefore appeals to farther proof.

SECTION XXII.

Chap. v. ver. 32—47.

CHRIST'S TESTIMONY OF JOHN.

32. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

That other person who bears witness of Christ, is the Father. ver. 37.

33. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.

34. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

Jesus says, I do not rest the proof of my being sent of God upon any human testimony. The end for which he said these things is our salvation: why then will we not let him save us? Why do *we not* lay what he said and did more to heart? It is plain he intended a particular regard should be paid to what he had been saying of his power and Godhead.

35. He was a burning and a shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

This reproof strikes many. Nothing is true work but lasting work.

36. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

Let us adhere to this, against the world. Nicodemus was certainly in the right, when he argued, that no man could do such works, except God be with him.

37. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

The Father bore witness to Christ, by a voice from heaven at his baptism. It is implied that they should have heard the voice of the Father: they had not because they would not. Not hearing to purpose, is not hearing; and not seeing, that is, not knowing him, as manifested by Christ, is not knowing him at all.

38. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

Christ's word, is God's word; and without believing in him, there is no possibility of knowing the mind and will of God.

39. Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

We cannot have too great a veneration for the Scripture, but we must not take it for what it is not. It shows us our death, and it acquaints us where life is to be had, but it can do no more for us. The one great scope of it, is to send us to Christ.

40. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

It matters little what else we do, if we do not go to Christ. What better would the lame, and the blind have been, for having a book which told them that Christ would heal them, if they had not applied to him? But they knew their case, and would not stop short of the Physician. O! it is a sore trial to the soul, to know its death in sin. Here we flinch, would fain heal ourselves, and for want of this conviction, never go directly to Christ for the life we want, and which he alone can give us.

41. I receive not honour from men.

I am far above it, and neither need nor desire it.

42. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.

Does Christ know this of us?

43. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

The truth of God is cross to the will of man, and this is a bar to the reception of it at all times.

44. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only ?

1st, We cannot believe savingly, till we know that we are unworthy of esteem. Faith lays us in the dust. 2ndly, We cannot have both kinds of honour if we would. The world hath none for those who seek that which cometh from God only. Christ, here and elsewhere, arms his disciples against the fear of reproach, knowing it to be their lot.

45. Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father : there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.

46. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me : for he wrote of me.

47. But if ye believe not his writing, how shall ye believe my words ?

The Jews pretended to reverence Moses, yet they did not believe his writings : it was not to be wondered at that they did not believe the words of Christ, whom they despised. The Scriptures, if they be not believed and obeyed, will be our accusers at the day of judgment.

SECTION XXIII.

Chap. vi. ver. 1—14.

CHRIST FEEDS FIVE THOUSAND WITH FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISHES.

1. After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.

2. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

There is great force in miracles to draw us after Jesus, and they were wrought for this end. The principal thing to be considered, is, for what we follow him. We may possess him outwardly, and cleave to him for some purpose, though not for the work he wishes to accomplish in us. Those who followed him on this occasion, little thought that they were in the number of the diseased. This chapter will set us right in this point, if we are willing to be convinced.

3. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

4. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

5. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat ?

Philip should have said at once, Lord, thou canst provide for them ; but he failed in the trial. This would bring him to a better knowledge of himself. If Christ tries *us*, it is for our profit, and to convince us of our weakness and unbelief.

6. And this he said to prove him : for he himself knew what he would do.

7. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

8. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

9. There is a lad here, which hath five barley-loaves, and two small fishes : but what are they among so many ?

10. And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

Both the disciples and the men did as they were bidden, and all the rest was easy to him. If our faith do not fail in whatever he commands us, his power will not.

11. And Jesus took the loaves ; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down : and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

We should give thanks after the example of Christ, as much as if every morsel was brought to us by a miracle, as indeed it is by many. What blessings is Christ not always ready to distribute by the mouths and hands of his ministers, if we were but as ready to receive them ?

12. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

He said this, who made the loaves, and could make as many more as he pleased. His words are suited to teach all, economy in the midst of plenty, and to beware of wasting any food which may satisfy the hunger of the poor. Let none of Christ's words be lost.

13. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley-loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

14. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.

Let us say this in faith, with our hearts, for our souls, and of a truth he will be a prophet unto us.

SECTION XXIV.

Chap. vi. ver. 15—27.

CHRIST WITHDRAWS TO THE SEA-SIDE.

15. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

This people knew not themselves, nor for what they wanted Christ, and therefore they totally mistook his office and business in the world, thinking he would appear among them as a great temporal prince. They followed him with nothing but the world in their hearts, and from such persons he must depart.

16. And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea,

17. And entered into a ship, and went over the sea towards Capernaum : and it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.

18. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.

19. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship : and they were afraid.

20. But he saith unto them, It is I, be not afraid.

These last words of Christ are suited to revive the soul which is in trouble for sin.

21. Then they willingly received him into the ship : and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

So shall we come safe to our desired haven, whatever storms we meet with by the way, if Christ is with us.

22. The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea, saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone :

23 (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias, nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks :)

24. When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.

25. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither ?

26. Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

They did not enter into the true design of Christ's miracles, and therefore might as well not have seen them. So it may be that we hearing, hear not. Christ knows well what is uppermost in our hearts. In vain do we seek, or own him, for anything but himself, and his power in us, turning us to God.

27. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

He does not mean, that we are not to labour at all for the meat which perisheth, but not in the first place. He hath meat of a better kind for us, and our great hunger must be for that. If we live only for the body, though in never so smooth a way, we perish.

By the miracle Christ had just wrought, and by all others, God was confirming his mission. This was God's sealing to him as the Messiah, and we seal with God, when we consent to receive life from the Son of God, knowing how much we need it. Has this time come to us, or not?

SECTION XXV.

Chap. vi. ver. 28—40.

CHRIST PROCLAIMS HIMSELF THE BREAD OF LIFE.

28. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

If any one asks this question sincerely, and is ready to receive the answer from Christ's own mouth, he cannot possibly miss of salvation.

29. Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

“This is the work of God,” most pleasing to him, and necessary to us, because it is the most important work for our acceptance with him, and it puts us into the way of all other holy working. “That ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” Not only as the person whom we are to hear and obey; but as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world,” by the sacrifice of himself; and believing, is effectually believing, in both respects.

30. They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee ? what dost thou work ?

This they ask, as if feeding five thousand persons with five barley loaves and two fishes, was nothing. Let us not mistake ; the world is not altered. The nature of man is always the same, ready to cavil, backward to believe, and hard to be convinced ; and if we never perceived this in ourselves, we know not yet of what manner of spirit we are.

31. Our fathers did eat manna in the desert ; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

32. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven ; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

The bread which Moses gave to the Israelites, was not that which nourisheth to everlasting life. Neither Moses, nor any other creature, angel or man, hath this to give.

33. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

34. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

This was a vain wish. It was a pleasing thing to hear of the bread of life, and they could not but desire it in some degree ; nevertheless they would not take it in the way in which it was offered them. Let us look at ourselves. When Christ is truly known, as great a benefit as he is, there is enough in him to offend us.

35. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life : he that cometh to me shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

He shall have a life from me which does not need to be supported by meat and drink as our present life does, and therefore shall have no hunger and thirst for them.

36. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

If we put *hearing* in the place of *seeing*, the passage will

apply to us, and it is all one : and if we believe not, our condemnation will be the same.

37. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Every true believer will come to Christ ; and they are given to Christ by the Father, because the faith that brings them to Christ is his gift. Jesus will certainly take him to himself who cometh to him. This word cannot fail us. But let us remember that the reverse is true : him that doth not come to him, he will cast out, or reject for ever.

38. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

40. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life : and I will raise him up at the last day.

The latter word explains the former. Believing on him is seeing him, that is, with the eye of the soul, in his saving presence, and the glory of his undertaking for sinners. The Christian must have everlasting life *now* ; else he cannot be raised up to it at the last day. We are for ever, what we are when we lie down in our graves.

SECTION XXVI.

Chap. vi. ver. 41—53.

CHRIST THE BREAD OF LIFE.

41. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

Let us take notice that these murmurers were the very men who said, “ Lord, evermore give us this bread.” If

they had really desired it, they would have had fewer objections to Christ.

42. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know ? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven ?

43. Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

44. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him : and I will raise him up at the last day.

The meaning is not that the Father will draw him *irresistibly*. The words seem to have been spoken partly in reproof of the Jews ; as if he had said, whatever you pretend, you have nothing of God in you ; though he would draw you, you will not be drawn by him ; you are hardened past conviction ; and will neither hear his voice, nor yield to any evidence, which would draw you to me. It is also a certain truth, and here plainly asserted, that no man cometh to Christ, except the Father draw him by his exciting, and assisting grace.

45. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

They shall be all taught of God, that is, they must, as well by inward illumination, as the outward teaching of the Son. Every one taught of the Father, cometh to Christ, as we may : and yet, alas ! how many will not.

46. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

And therefore hearing, and learning of him, is hearing and learning of the Father.

47. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

48. I am that bread of life.

Let us observe carefully, that believing on Christ, is the same with “ eating him as the bread of life,” or “ eating his flesh, and drinking his blood.” And as the body hath

its food, without which it must die, so it is with the soul ; it must of all necessity be nourished with its proper food, and that food is Christ. We may hence easily understand what follows in this chapter. The great difficulty is to have the true hunger and thirst for the food.

49. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

It was only food for the body. They did not get that true life from it, which the grave cannot hold. But will not all men be raised again ? Yes, but with this difference, that the wicked will be raised by the power of God, to receive their sentence of condemnation ; and believers will be raised, by the same spirit dwelling in them, which raised Christ from the dead. Rom. viii. 11.

50. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

That is, may have a never-ending life from it, though, like all others, he must pass through the way of death to the full enjoyment of it.

51. I am the living bread which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever ; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

By sacrificing it upon the cross for the sin of the world, by a particular application of it to every one for the nourishment of spiritual life, especially in the supper of the Lord Jesus Christ.

52. The Jews therefore strove amongst themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat ?

In the way they supposed, he could not. They cavilled at him from a mistake of their own. Christ only wants to be understood.

53. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

Christ, both God and man, as sent and commissioned to give life to poor perishing sinners, by all he did and suffered in our nature, and believed in for that end.

SECTION XXVII.

Chap. vi. ver. 54—63.

CHRIST FURTHER EXPLAINS HOW HE IS THE BREAD OF LIFE.

54. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

55. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

57. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

Every one eats from the life he has, and that life is maintained by what he eats, relishes, and hungers for. It is therefore of all questions the most interesting: What doth the soul feed upon? From whence doth it receive satisfaction to its desires? From God in Christ, or from the world, and the flesh?

58. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

59. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

60. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying, who can hear it?

So we say to this day, this, and that is hard: Christ's yoke is intolerable. But he himself calls it easy. The secret is, when we are in him by faith, it sits light and easy upon us, and we have also the strength to bear it; till then everything is hard, and if we put our necks into his yoke one day, we take them out another.

61. When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?

62. What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before ?

When he will have power to make good all he hath said of our quickening by him. Or rather, he spoke this to obviate their gross conceit of really, and materially, eating his flesh. How could they eat his flesh when he was soon to be removed out of their sight ?

63. It is the spirit that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing : the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

Supposing they could and did eat it, in their mistaken sense, it would profit them nothing. The Spirit of God operating on the spirit of man to receive Christ for life, here is profit ; the quickening is by the soul's desire and intention. Apply this to eating and drinking in the sacrament. To receive Christ in it, there is something more to be done, besides taking the bread and wine into our mouths. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life : " that is, to be understood of spiritual life, from spiritual eating.

The whole of this discourse, from versethetwenty-seventh, amounts to this : Christ is to every soul, what bread, or flesh, is to one perishing with hunger : and if we do not come hungering and thirsting to him, as our relief, and receive him into our hearts by faith, we die eternally.

SECTION XXVIII.

Chap. vi. ver. 64—71.

SOME ARE OFFENDED AT CHRIST.

64. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning, who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

Jesus knows how many of us will not believe. Do we

know every one for ourselves, as it is a matter of life and death ?

65. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, That no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father.

The power is offered to all, and if we do not come to him, it is our own fault ; as, what we will not take, is in effect not given us.

66. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

They left him quite ! O unhappy men ! Though we do not truly belong to him, it is better not to turn our backs on *him*, and his word altogether, because some time or other he may lay hold of us.

67. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away ?

Will you also forsake him, though all the world does ? His flock is always a little one ; but let not this daunt us ; we have no choice but either to be with it, or perish with the world.

68. Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

Generally, we think we may go anywhere but to Christ. Let us allow our hearts to speak ; where, this moment, does the strength of our desires carry us ? “ Thou hast the words of eternal life :” but let us take heed, that we do not leave out repentance, faith, and newness of life, from these words.

69. And we believe, and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

He came into the world that we might all say this, and saying it truly is salvation.

70. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil ?

Christ chose Judas with the same intent and meaning as he did the other apostles. But it was a sad thing for him,

as it will be for us, to choose Satan, and his service, when we may have Christ.

71. He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

The forbearance of Jesus towards Judas, is calculated to admonish us of our danger of coming short of the favour of God at the last. May the Lord help us to put away the sin that doth most easily beset us.—*Edit.*

SECTION XXIX.

Chap. vii. ver. 1—13.

CHRIST REPROVES HIS KINSMEN.

1. After these things, Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.

2. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.

3. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.

4. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly: If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.

They were in the common mistake of the Jews, that the Messiah would set up a worldly kingdom, to aggrandise their nation, and free them from their enemies: and therefore, supposing he could not but have this end in view, they wondered he did not declare for it more openly.

5. For neither did his brethren believe in him.

An endeavour to shape Christ according to our own wills, will, of necessity, for ever exclude belief. Neither the brethren of Jesus, nor his nearest relations with their worldly hearts, were nearer to belief than others.

6. Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come : but your time is always ready.

Christ's time was not yet come, of showing himself openly, as he did afterward at his public entry into Jerusalem, though they were in haste for it, and with a wrong view.

7. The world cannot hate you ; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

The world cannot hate you, who are upon good terms with it, neither knowing it, nor yourselves. " But me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." This was point blank against their notion, that Christ would be received with universal approbation by the Jews, as their king. What is the office of Christ's servants, but, like him, to bear their testimony against the world? And what will follow, if they are faithful to it? Here is the ground of the quarrel against them, whatever else is pretended : and if they do not give occasion for it, what are they ?

8. Go ye up unto this feast : I go not up yet unto this feast ; for my time is not yet full come.

He would not go with them, or not openly, and in the manner they would have him, as is explained in verse the tenth.

9. When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.

10. But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

11. Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he ?

Let a person ask this question truly, and he will be sure to find Jesus.

12. And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him : for some said, He is a good man : others said, Nay ; but he deceiveth the people.

13. Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

So the truth, that is, the ministration of the gospel, is always treated; and if Jesus himself could not please all, let none expect to succeed better.

SECTION XXX.

Chap. vii. ver. 14—24.

CHRIST TEACHETH IN THE TEMPLE.

14. Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

This was his business in the world, and he was always intent upon it. Happy are they who are ready to learn of him.

15. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?

In answer, he tells them plainly whence he had the skill and ability to teach, and also what it was which hindered them from learning of him.

16. Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

Christ tells them, that his doctrine comes directly from God, and that it was not acquired in the ordinary way.

17. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

He that will do the will of God, is fitted by this disposition to discern, and receive the truth, and God will not suffer him to be deceived. It does not follow that any man shall know all things, or never be deceived in anything; but if we are deceived upon the whole, the fault is in our own wills. If you are blind in what concerns your salvation, it is not for want of learning: you here know

from Christ where to look for the cause of your blindness.

18. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory : but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

A man who speaks for himself, shows that he speaks of himself, and has his own ends in view in all he does. How few can bear the test contained in the latter part of this verse !

19. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law ? Why go ye about to kill me ?

They had no such thoughts of themselves, as that they were going about to kill Christ, and scorned the imputation, though it was strictly true. We have a piercing eye upon us.

20. The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil : who goeth about to kill thee ?

Christ had borne his testimony, that their deeds were evil, by charging them with murder in their hearts. And what did they do ? They reviled him horribly, and so the matter ended. What are we the better than these Jews ? If Christ does not bring us to self-conviction, and amendment, we cannot but hate him. No doubt these men had some form of confessing their sins to God ; but, like us, did not mean to be taken at their word. Tell one, who calls himself a miserable sinner in his prayers, wherein he is so, though never so charitably and respectfully, and he will think no usage bad enough for you.

21. Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

You all wonder at me for breaking the sabbath, as you suppose.

22. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision ; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers ;) and ye on the sabbath day circumsise a man.

23. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the

law of Moses should not be broken ; are ye angry at me because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day ?

Christ knew the miracle had wrought a perfect cure on him in body and soul.

24. Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Consider before you condemn.

SECTION XXXI.

Chap. vii. ver. 25—39.

HIS DISCOURSE CONTINUED.

25. Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill ?

26. But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ.

Are they really of this mind, that they suffer him to pass unmolested ? These, it seems, were some of the forwardest to have him censured, and they pretended to give a reason why he could not be the Christ.

27. Howbeit we know this man whence he is : but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

They were mistaken in both respects. Christ was not of Nazareth, as they supposed ; and they might have known that he was of Bethlehem ; which seems to be the meaning of his saying in verse the twenty-eighth.

28. Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am : and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.

He tells them they knew, or might have known, and they would not. In conclusion, he speaks to this effect,

whatever you know, there is one thing of which you are sadly ignorant : you know not God, nor ever will, till you know him as sending me, and me as sent by him.

29. But I know him : for I am from him, and he hath sent me,

If we do not know God, let us allow Christ to teach us to know him.

30. Then they sought to take him : but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

See how God overrules the designs of men, and has his bridle in their jaws. If he were to let them loose, there would be no living in the world.

31. And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done ?

They argued correctly ; and gave such a reason for their belief, as all the world could not answer.

32. The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him ; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

33. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.

It may be but a little while with *us*. We have a precious moment now in our hands, and death will soon snatch it from us.

34. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me : and where I am, thither ye cannot come.

Because they would not. Nothing can keep us from God, but our own wills.

35. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him ? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles ?

36. What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me : and where I am, thither ye cannot come ?

They would have understood him better, if their wills had inclined them to seek him ; and their hearts had been set upon the place where he was going.

37. In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

Christ, we may be sure, would give the most weighty instruction when there was the greatest concourse, “in the last day.” “Jesus stood and cried.” Hark ! he cries now, and with so loud a voice as to be heard by all, in all parts of the earth. “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.” Whoever is athirst for Christ, will come to him, and none else can.

38. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

That is, living water shall flow from Christ, as from a fountain, or conduit, to believers. This is too much to be said of any other, and the scripture says it only of Christ. No man has such abundance, no, nor a drop of this living, or life-giving water to bestow ; it is all in Christ, and to him we must go for it.

39. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive : for the Holy Ghost was not yet given ; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

The Holy Spirit then is the author and giver of life, namely, as sent by Christ, and acting in his stead,—the purchase of his sufferings, and the fruit of his ascension into glory, and his session in that state.

SECTION XXXII.

Chap. vii. ver. 40—53.

DIVERS OPINIONS OF CHRIST.

40. Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

41. Others said, This is the Christ.

The Jews therefore did not suppose the prophet spoken of by Moses, in Deut. xviii. 15—18, to be the Christ.

41. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee ?

42. Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was ?

Here they contradict what they had said before in verse twenty-seven, “When Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.”

43. So there was a division among the people because of him.

We may think there is no division among *us*, at least in one respect, and that we are all for Christ. But when he comes, we are told he will make a separation, and that he will set many who call themselves by his name, on the left hand. He knows whose hearts are with him, whatever they pretend.

44. And some of them would have taken him ; but no man laid hands on him.

Before God’s time, they could not. The true servants of God know that nothing can hurt them without his leave ; and when it is his will, they give themselves up to suffering.

45. Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees ; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him ?

46. The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

So *we* think ; but to what purpose, if the truth from his mouth do not tie up our hands, and restrain us from acting against him, as it did them ?

47. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived ?

Fear not this reproach. As sure as ever any belong to Christ, they must hear it from their ignorant neighbours.

48. Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?

This is a prevailing argument at all times with the careless, and the slothful, who will be at no pains to inquire into the truth of the gospel of Christ. But we may observe from hence how necessary it is to judge for ourselves, and that there are plain cases in which none can be deceived. If the people, in this instance, had seen only with the eyes of the learned, they would never have seen Christ. On the other hand, there is certainly a deference due to lawful teachers, and to the apostle's injunction, "Obey them that have the rule over you."

49. But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

Here the cursers were stark mad, completely blind, and cursed themselves: they were the very men who knew not the law.

50. Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)

51. Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

Nicodemus did not go to Jesus for nothing. He had learned of him to purpose, and durst now own him in the face of danger.

52. They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

They flew in the face of Nicodemus at once, with a bitter taunt. We have reason to be thankful to God, that he did not regard it. They gave Nicodemus advice to search and look; but, alas! they did not follow the advice themselves. If they would have traced Christ up to Bethlehem, as they might have done, their eyes might have been opened. Let us search, and we shall see the truth. Why are we blind in the things of Christ, but because we do not inquire after them with care, and a suitable concern?

53. And every man went unto his own house.

Nothing came of their consultation against Jesus at that time, because his hour for being delivered to their will was not yet come. Nevertheless, though God restrained them, their guilt was the same, and in his judgment they did what they would have done. "Keep thy heart with all diligence!"

SECTION XXXIII.

Chap. viii. ver. 1—11.

THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY.

1. Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.

2. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

Christ was always intent upon his business. Minister, look at thy pattern. "And all the people came unto him;" here is a lesson for the people. Christ is now going to teach *us*. Let what he says reach our consciences; that finding our sin, we may go to him for forgiveness, and learn of him to abhor, and forsake all sin.

3. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

4. They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

5. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

6. This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

What? Could they think that he who declared lustful looking to be adultery, would countenance the gross act? No; but they knew he had a way of his own of discharging from sin, and doubted not but his answer

would furnish them with matter of accusation against him, as an enemy to the law, and to good works. We shall find, that they were caught themselves, and made to become their own accusers; as we all shall be, whenever we know ourselves.

No one knows what Christ wrote on the ground. It is in vain to guess. Perhaps his intention might be to give them time, and to prepare them for self-reflection.

7. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

They would not be satisfied, but continued to ask. No more would he. He now comes full upon them with his purpose. O what shall we do, when he lifts up himself with his searching look, to make a way for himself into our consciences! It will be better to have this searching look now, than that our first knowledge of all should come to us at the day of judgment.

“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” How many hard stones do many of us cast at others every day of our lives, without ever thinking of sin in ourselves!

8. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

9. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

The most demure hypocrites, and those who came with the best opinion of themselves, sneaked off first. But let every one, who thinks well of himself, take especial notice, that he is more hardened than they were, if these very words do not bring light and conviction to his mind.

All the accusers were gone, and only Jesus, the woman, and the company who witnessed the whole, were left.

10. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but

the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

Let us ask ourselves, each one, Have I never condemned myself? If that be not the case with us, we shall be busy, bold censurers of others all our lives.

11. She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

The meaning is, I do not give thee up to condemnation: there is mercy with the Lord. Blessed be God for this saying. It is the very thing we all want; and when we know it, the words of Jesus will sound sweetly in our hearts. But let us remember, all will be lost, if the next words do not sound as deeply into them, "Go, and sin no more." Let none pretend to believe one from the mouth of Christ, if they do not believe the other.

The Pharisees knew that Jesus forgave sins, and preached the forgiveness of sins, and supposing, in their great wisdom, that it was a dangerous doctrine, laid a snare for him, into which they thought he must necessarily fall, either by retracting what he had said at other times of the forgiveness of sins, or by diminishing from the sacredness of the law. Jesus was not to be caught in the snare; but with admirable address, he brought their consciences over to his side; and at the same time he preached both the law and the gospel, by forgiving the sinner, and condemning all sin.

Note, this passage of the woman taken in adultery, is omitted in some copies of the Gospel of St. Luke, and removed out of its place in others. But what miserable mistakers of the gospel, and sacrilegious robbers of our peace, were those who would have secreted it! I suppose, with the same pharisaical pretence, as if it might do harm.

SECTION XXXIV.

Chap. viii. ver. 12—25.

CHRIST IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

12. Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Christ is to the soul what the sun is to all nature; and those who follow him in his teaching and example, are in the way of a true life here, and have the light in them which leadeth to eternal life; necessarily implying, that whoever does not follow him, is in the darkness of death, whatever he does, or whatever he thinks of himself.

13. The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.

They declared that his record was not true; because, as they pretended, it was unsupported by other evidence. What they said was false; he had other witness besides his own; and we learn from hence that no evidence is sufficient for those who will not be convinced.

14. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.

“My record is true,” in itself; for I know what I am, though you do not.

15. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.

Ye judge blindly, proudly, without self-knowledge, and therefore without pity; as in case of the poor woman. “I judge no man,” without first offering him mercy, and calling him to repentance.

16. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

Christ's judgment is infallible, and strictly just, though he were to give up all to condemnation. But to our comfort, He, who best knoweth the desert of sin, and cannot be deceived in judging of any, is not like rash man, for proceeding to extremities at once.

17. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

18. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.

Though his testimony was true in itself, he did not expect they should acquiesce in it, but refers them again to fuller evidence, that of the Father bearing witness to his mission by miracles. Those who reject him, will be made to know that it was not for want of proof.

19. Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me nor my Father; if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

This assertion came from his mouth more than once, or twice. We cannot possibly know God in his justice and holiness, what he does to save us, and what he expects from us, and why he will condemn us, but through the knowledge of Christ. And yet vain man, who neither knows himself, nor anything else, will be prying into the mind of God, and telling him what he must do.

20. These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

St. John repeats this observation, and it has great weight in it. Whatever men propose, they cannot stir one step in the execution of their designs, without the will of God.

21. Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

How dreadful, never to find the want of Christ, till we are dying in our sins! "Whither I go, ye cannot come." The impossibility was in their own wills, and worldly hearts.

22. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.

They meant, that they would have him, if he was anywhere in the world.

23. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

This is the case of all out of Christ; and they are in a state of condemnation, because they are from beneath, and of this world, and have not got above it, by faith in Christ. The consequence he states in the next verse.

24. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

This is the awful consequence of unbelief at all times, and to all persons.—*Edit.*

25. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.

How many are so ignorant of Christ, as to be ready to ask, who he is? How many say plainly, christian knowledge is too deep for them!

Jesus, in effect, tells us, "he is the same," he is at a word with us, and cannot alter himself to suit our purpose. If we stay till doom's-day, he will never be any other than what he has already declared himself to be.

SECTION XXXV.

Chap. viii. ver. 26—38.

CHRIST JUSTIFIES HIS DOCTRINE.

26. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

Let us take heed lest Christ should have many things to say and judge of us.

27. They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.

And therefore what he spake was the same as if it had been spoken by the Father. This is what every Christian believes.

28. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

He says that they should know him after his crucifixion, by his resurrection, ascension, and sending the Holy Spirit. But did they generally know, and own him? No. The meaning therefore is, that they should have the fullest possible means of knowing him. They knew indeed in dreadful reality who he was, in their national punishment.

29. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

He that is able to say this sincerely, knows Christ, and the way to have God with him.

30. As he spake these words, many believed on him.

31. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.

Let us learn of Christ himself what is a sure mark of discipleship. But how can we receive, or continue in his word, if we will not be at the pains to know what it is?

32. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Blessed is the man who says, I will know the truth, and be of it, whatever it costs me. "And the truth shall make you free." Free from the tyranny of sin, the yoke of the law as a covenant, a spirit of bondage, and the fear of condemnation: free to choose what God chooses for us.

33. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were

never in bondage to any man : how sayest thou, ye shall be made free ?

It was utterly false that they were never in bondage. Besides the inward bondage of sin, of which Christ was here speaking, they were not their own masters ; yet they would not understand that they had been, and were then, in a state of outward bondage to another nation. How blind and perverse is man !

34. Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

He is a poor slave to the worst of masters ; he has as many masters as sins, and nothing but death for his wages.

35. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever : but the Son abideth ever.

In Christ we are sons, and heirs with him. He came to make us sons and heirs. He came to free us from sin, which we have contracted through our blindness and ignorance ; he came to make us free to righteousness, through the truth. Out of Christ we have neither lot nor portion in God's family.

36. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

To this test we must come. Has Christ indeed made us free, to serve God, and live according to his will, with the full consent of our minds ? For servants we must be, either of God or Satan ; and freedom, is not freedom to do what we please, but what we should. We know that we should love and obey God, and yet the world and our lusts will not suffer us. What is this but Satan's chain about us ? As ever you would be happy, let Christ take it off.

37. I know that ye are Abraham's seed : but ye seek to kill me because my word hath no place in you.

38. I speak that which I have seen with my Father : and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

Who that father is he tells them afterwards. We have either the nature of God, or that of the devil, in us : and

according to that nature, one, or the other, is our father. We have no other choice. Surely it behoves us to know whose children we are.

SECTION XXXVI.

Chap. viii. ver. 39—49.

CHRIST'S AUTHORITY ASSERTED.

39. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

So he says to us; what is your baptism, and Christian profession, without the works proper to them?

40. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

41. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they unto him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God,

Saying this vehemently, is not sufficient. Let us think how much is implied in being a child of God.

42. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth, and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

Jesus tells us he came from the Father, to teach us to know and love him as a Father.

43. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

Hearing, is hearing in an honest and good heart; and in the want of this, they *could* not, none *can*, hear and understand.

44. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

This is a horrid relation ! If we have not already broken ourselves off from Satan, surely we shall do it as soon as possible.

45. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

The very reason why the gospel is so little believed is, because it is the truth. It does not suit our worldly wills, and depraved natures; which for the most part, is what we mean by our reason.

46. Which of you convinceth me of sin ? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me ?

He had not one blemish in his life, to lessen the force of truth from his mouth. None other could ever make this challenge.

47. He that is of God, heareth God's words : ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

You do not hear God's word with effect. The true disciple not only hears, but approves, and believes. Others "hear, and hear not." Having nothing of God in them, his words can take no hold of them; and their not receiving them is full proof that they have nothing of God in them.

48. Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil ?

Remember this when you are reproached for the truth's sake.

49. Jesus answered, I have not a devil ; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.

This was a full answer to their charge, that he had a devil. How could he be possessed with Satan, who had nothing at heart but the glory of God ?

SECTION XXXVII.

Chap. viii. ver. 50—59.

JESUS JUSTIFIES HIMSELF.

50. And I seek not mine own glory : there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

Who will judge you, and vindicate me, to your eternal confusion, if you do not believe.

51. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

Christ here teaches that there is no way to escape death. Though believers die, like all other men, it is not under a sentence of death ; and the life which is begun in them, if they keep it to the end, does not die with their bodies.

52. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets ; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

53. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead ? and the prophets are dead : whom makest thou thyself ?

54. Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing : it is my Father that honoureth me ; of whom ye say, that he is your God.

55. Yet ye have not known him ; but I know him : and if I should say, I know him not, I should be a liar like unto you : but I know him, and keep his saying.

56. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day : and he saw it, and was glad.

Abraham had Christ revealed to him, and he made him all his hope. As great a saint as he was, his joy was in Christ, and the righteousness of faith.

57. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham ?

They spake of the age of Jesus, at the highest calculation, not knowing how old he was.

58. Jesus saith unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

That is, I had a being, and that from eternity.

59. Then took they up stones to east at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

This he probably did by a divine power. He held their eyes so that they saw him no longer. As God did at the prayer of Elisha, 2 Kings, vi. 17—19.

SECTION XXXVIII.

Chap. ix. ver. 1—7.

THE MAN BORN BLIND RESTORED TO SIGHT.

1. And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

2. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

They inquired if he had sinned in some other body. It seems that they had entertained the notion of the transmigration of souls; or, perhaps, they thought his blindness was a punishment for some sin foreseen. What they meant is not the matter of the chiefest concern to us.

3. Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

His blindness was not inflicted on him for any particular sin, or sinfulness, of himself, or his parents.

His restoration to sight was for the glory of God, and to promote our belief in Christ. This man's blindness brought him to the knowledge of Christ, and proved the greatest of all blessings to him. Afflictions are the means of saving more souls, perhaps, than anything else; and it

is his own fault if God does not produce good out of all the evil that befalls us.

4. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day : the night cometh, when no man can work.

Here Christ speaks like other men, and chiefly to give a lesson of instruction to all. We have a work upon our hands, which must of all necessity be done, and we have not a moment's time to spare.

“The night cometh, when no man can work.” If that night, which gives us up to judgment, should be near at hand, are we ready? O! let us think, this night, and every night we lie down in our beds, what is our great business in the world, and what condition we are in to appear before God.

5. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Christ is not less so, now that he is in heaven. He is the light of the world at all times. He is now in the world to shine upon *us*, and now is our time for walking in his light, and for reaping the full benefit of it.

6. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

The healing virtue was not in the clay, (for no means could be more unlikely,) but in the power of him who formed man of the dust of the ground; and we make the right improvement of the miracle, when we trust in the same power for our spiritual sight, and new creation.

7. And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

The interpretation affords a lesson to us. The word *sent*, naturally turns our thoughts to Christ, who was sent of God for our recovery. All depends on knowing our need of him. “He was washed, and came seeing.” There was no more virtue in the pool than in the clay, to restore his

sight ; but he did as he was commanded, and his cure followed.

SECTION XXXIX.

Chap. ix. ver. 8—17.

HE IS BROUGHT TO THE PHARISEES.

8. The neighbours, therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged ?

9. Some said, This is he : others said, He is like him ; but he said, I am he.

These persons present a true picture of mankind, blundering in the dark, some saying one thing, some another, but unwilling to see the truth when it is presented to them. “ But he said, I am he.” Let us endeavour to say this, every one of us for ourselves: I am he to whom the Lord hath showed mercy.

10. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened ?

11. He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash : and I went and washed, and I received sight.

The blind man is now preaching to us, and is sending us to Jesus for the cure we all want of him. If it was for our bodies we should listen to him, and say, he who healed him, can heal me. Remember who gave him this name Jesus, and for what end. Matt. i. 21.

12. Then said they unto him, Where is he ? He said, I know not.

13. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

They did this that they might inquire into, and consider the matter. Some of them soon decided it, by aspersing him as a sabbath-breaker. You may here see with

advantage, how hardly those who would have condemned him, were put to it, to find a pretext.

14. And it was the sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

15. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

16. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

Upon the weak and false pretence that Jesus did not keep the sabbath-day, they baffled the force of a miracle, which was intended to open their eyes. So Christ's servants are first reproached falsely, and then disgraced. Others justly ask, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" Let us come in with these, into the light of divine truth, and leave the rest to their blindness. Let us hold to the evidence of miracles, and we shall keep fast hold of Christ, and have an invincible argument for believing, and obeying him in everything, though never so cross to our own reason, and worldly interest.

"There was a division among them," and there is a division wherever Christ comes. We have his own word for it, Matt. x. 35: "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Jesus, however, brings us a blessed peace, peace with God, peace in ourselves, and a peaceable disposition towards all men; but his followers must, and will speak for him, and this, of course, sets the world against them. Where is the blame?

17. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

Do we, will we say this? If he has opened our eyes what do we therefore think of him?

The cure of this man had wrought faith in him, and faith

made him bold to acknowledge Christ to be a prophet. Why are we afraid to speak for Jesus, but because we have received little or nothing from him ?

SECTION XL.

Chap. ix. ver. 18—28.

THE MIRACLE IS DISPUTED.

18. But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

If they had only wanted to know the truth, and then to make a proper use of it, this would have been right. But it was the strong working of unbelief, and this turns itself into all shapes to avoid conviction.

19. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind ? how then doth he now see ?

20. His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind :

21. But by what means he now seeth, we know not ; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not : he is of age ; ask him : he shall speak for himself.

22. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews : for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

Fear of man, is one of the greatest difficulties we have to encounter, in coming to Christ. Here thousands stop short, and though they see the right way, will not enter upon it ; because the world is in another way, and they do not choose to endure its reproaches.

23. Therefore said his parents, He is of age, ask him.

24. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise : we know that this man is a sinner.

By a true confession, they bid him give God the praise. This is worthy of our notice, though it came from such unhallowed mouths.

When they said, "We know that this man is a sinner," they meant that they themselves were not. Here was great boldness, and, as it often happens, arising from great blindness. Well may others, knowing themselves to be sinners, bear to have this said of them, when it was said so confidently of the only man who never was a sinner.

25. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not : one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

We are all born blind to the things of God, as this man was in respect of his bodily eyes. What can we say now? That our eyes are opened to see sin in ourselves more than we ever imagined, and death for sin ; to see Christ, and life in him : to see the beauty and necessity of holiness, and that our wills are with Christ for the attainment of it? Or are we still blind, going on in the beaten track of the world, seeing no need of Christ, and never considering what a work he has to do in us? Whatever you may think, it is the happiest condition on earth, to be able to say truly, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

26. Then said they to him again, What did he unto thee? how opened he thine eyes?

Mark again the workings of unbelief, and how it seeks for pretences to maintain itself. They said, "*What* did he to thee," and *how* opened he thine eyes? when the only thing they should have asked was respecting the fact, that they *were opened*, and that it could only be by a divine power.

27. He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear : wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

They heard but they did not believe him. What is all

our hearing, if it does not bring us to faith in Christ, and newness of life?

28. Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

They thought this the greatest reproach they could cast on him. Do not mistake: it is seldom otherwise. A true disciple is still a bye-word, even among those who call themselves Christians.

SECTION XLI.

Chap. ix. ver. 29—41.

THE JEWS CAST HIM OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

29. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

We know no more than they did, till we come to Christ in faith, and with an earnest desire to experience his power in us.

30. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

We know from whence he is, and have no doubt of his coming from God; but in vain, if we do not consider the ends for which he came, and that he might open *our* eyes.

31. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

The conclusion was undeniable; God would never have enabled him to perform such a miracle, if he had been a sinner. Let us apply this to our own prayers, and learn from hence in what way they will be heard.

32. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

33. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

The plain reasoning of this man, did not convince them ; but rather provoked their enmity still more. When men cannot answer an argument, they too often revile those who offer it.—*Edit.*

34. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us ? And they cast him out.

Because he was born blind, they accused him of having been born in sin. We are often falling into the same rashness, and presumption : Christ knew better.

“ Dost thou teach us ?” Observe the blindness and pride of worldly wisdom. They thought not of sin in themselves, and would not be taught by an illiterate man. Nevertheless, he was well qualified for the office, by the recovery of his sight, and the knowledge of Christ’s power in himself.

“ And they cast him out,” namely, of their communion. If man’s judgment were always to be ratified in heaven, many saints would be excluded.

35. Jesus heard that they had cast him out ; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God ?

Doubtless we think it great condescension in Jesus, and a great blessing to this poor man, that he would be at the pains to seek him. O ! did he not come down from heaven with bowels of pity, to seek and to save us all, to suffer and die for us ? Does he not seek us in his word, and make the first offer of himself to us by his Spirit ? And does he not rejoice over us when we are found of him ? Let us think ourselves lost and undone without him, and we shall be found of him.

Remember that, “ by grace ye are saved, through faith,” Eph. ii. 8, and then we shall see how necessary it is that every one of us should be able to answer this important question for ourselves, “ Dost thou believe on the Son of God ?”

36. He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him ?

We have not this question to ask. We know it is *he*, the only begotten Son of God, who was born of the Virgin Mary, and who came into the world to save sinners.

37. And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

He has been speaking to us throughout this chapter, as well as to the blind man ; he speaks to us in every one of the gospels, and all to this end, that he may bring us to a spiritual sight of him, and speak himself into our hearts.

38. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, as thy Saviour and Redeemer, and the worship of thy heart will follow.

39. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see ; and that they which see might be made blind.

Christ says, “ I am come for judgment,”—to give to every man according to the truth of his case. “ That they which see not might see ;” who though blind, as all men are by nature, yet know themselves, and are willing to have their eyes opened ; these, through mercy, shall see. “ And that they which see might be made blind.” Who think they see when they do not, and are too wise to learn of Christ. These, by the judgment of God, shall be left to their natural blindness.

40. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also ?

We need not their learning to have enough of their pride, and self-conceit. What ! says one, do you take me for a reprobate ? Have I not been baptized ? Would you make me believe that I am more ignorant than the rest of the world ? Another says, Do you think I have lived all this time for nothing ? One question put home to yourselves would stagger all this unbelief. Did you ever sit down

one hour in your whole lives, to think of your state, and what you must do to be saved ?

41. Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin : but now ye say, We see ; therefore your sin remaineth.

Better would it be for you, if ye were quite blind ; for then the sin you could not *see*, would not be laid to your charge. You are now condemned out of your own mouth, as sinning against light, because ye say, “ We see ; therefore your sin remaineth.”

SECTION XLII.

Chap. x. ver. 1—9.

CHRIST THE DOOR.

1. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

He that entereth not *by* Christ, and *for* Christ, by faith in him, and a sincere desire to bring others to him, “ but climbeth up some other way,” has some of his own ends in view ; and has no regard to the flock for its own good, but to make a prey of it for himself, “ the same is a thief and a robber.”

2. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

And no other is, in God’s account, whatever he may be in his own, or in the opinion of the world.

3. To him the porter openeth ; and the sheep hear his voice : and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

To understand this, and what follows, we must know that the way of keeping sheep in that country, was in some respects different from ours. Besides the shepherd, they

had a porter, or door-keeper, to guard the sheep by night from wild beasts and thieves; and they gave names to their sheep, which they were taught to know; and they followed the shepherd's call. In the spiritual meaning, God, or the Holy Spirit, is the door-keeper; and if he does not open to the shepherd, the sheep cannot follow him.

4. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

The shepherd of souls (the minister of Christ) *should* go before his sheep, in doctrine and example. "And the sheep follow him," as they ought to do, knowing his concern for them, and discerning the wholesomeness of his instructions.

5. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

The sheep would not follow a stranger; and persons enlightened by the Holy Spirit should not follow false teachers. The meaning farther is, that they shall be enabled to discern false teachers. If they are first disposed to follow God, he will not suffer them to be deceived to their ruin. John vii. 17.

6. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

Christ explains himself sufficiently, in what follows; and the way is so clearly marked out for all succeeding pastors, that, though they may desert, they cannot mistake it.

7. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

To the sheep; or, by which the shepherd enters to the care of them. For he is speaking of the *shepherds*, and *their* manner of entering upon *their* office.

8. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

Those who pretended to be the Messiah, as many did about that time, were thieves and robbers: but the true sheep, well-meaning disciples, deservedly so called for their sincerity and simplicity, “did not hear them.” For some did hear them, and the generality did not hear Christ.

9. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

“He shall go in and out,” with the consent and approbation of the door-keeper, (the Holy Ghost,) “and shall find pasture,” for his dear sheep, by an abundant supply from the chief shepherd.

Christ, sent of God to be the great shepherd of the sheep, is also the door by which all others enter upon their office; and under this similitude, his own care and concern for the sheep, and the qualifications of every true shepherd, are described in the most lively and affecting manner. Let all who are concerned, that is, the ministers of Christ, keep their eyes and hearts upon this pattern. And do thou, O blessed Jesus, enable us to follow thee, in a diligent and compassionate feeding the flock, which *thou* hast purchased with thy own blood.

SECTION XLIII.

Chap. x. ver. 10—18.

CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

10. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Behold the nature, and character of the false shepherd. His great aim is to feed himself; and of course the sheep must be neglected, and perish under his hands. “I am come that they might have life,” food, the means of life,

and that in greater plenty. Let us observe, that if he came for this end, we are in a starving condition without him. Let us seek a spirit of discernment to get this first and we shall be better able to know what is proper food for our souls.

11. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Well, so it is; this is being a good shepherd indeed; this is true concern for the flock; and, blessed be God, many have been enabled to follow Christ's example. May his love be deeply imprinted in the hearts of all!

12. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

Not he who taketh the hire is necessarily an hireling, for there is a divine warrant for that; but he who undertaketh the work chiefly, if not solely, *for* the hire. O! let us be Christ's own sheep! Let us be his property!

13. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

It is impossible that the hireling shepherd should stand by the sheep in a time of danger, or expose himself to any hardships for their sakes. *Self* will be sure to be true to itself. It would be better to lose the hire, than to have no enjoyment of it, or lose life for it. There is a Christian country, in which not a few run from their flocks, to live more at ease elsewhere. Of all the fallen sons of Adam, these are the most abandoned.

“And careth not for the sheep.” This, though a seemingly soft censure of a very bad disposition, cuts deep from the mouth of Jesus, whose care for the sheep cost him his life.

14. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

Christ does not say, “I am the good shepherd,” and

repeat it, to boast of himself; but that we might know and come to him as such. "And know my sheep," that is, know and love them. "And am known of mine," known and loved of them. Doubtless, he knows every one of us; who of us are his sheep, and who are not. But it is here said, that he also is known of *them*. In order to be his sheep, we must know him. Let us come to the point. Do we know him, to trust in him for the supply of all our wants, for remission of sins, an obedient will, and a new heart to love God?

15. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

I know the Father, even his whole heart of love to mankind. "And I lay down my life for the sheep," in full union with my Father's will.

16. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

They shall hear my voice, proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation to them, to their unspeakable comfort. The Jews were the only fold then. We are now gathered to it, by the mercy of God, according to the tenor of these words. O! let us be sure that we are of Christ's fold, by hearing his voice, following him faithfully, and cleaving to him for the life of our souls. O! let us think more especially of the time when Christ's one flock will be gathered to him in heaven out of all nations, and what it is to be separated from that flock for ever.

17. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

This is a most amazing discovery of God's love to us. Let us mark well what is here said, and let it sink deep into our hearts. "The Father therefore loveth the Son," as if he was dearer to him than ever, or, as if he never loved him before, *because* he willingly suffered death for our

redemption. Who can think of this without astonishment? Who can measure the depth of man's misery, or the height of God's love?

Christ takes his life again, for the benefit of mankind; thus overcoming death for the whole human nature.

18. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself:

It was not in the power of all the world to take it, if he had not freely laid it down for perishing sinners.

18. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.

Christ had power inherent in himself, as God, to speak the breath out of his body, as he did at his crucifixion; to quicken it again, as he did at his resurrection.

18. This commandment have I received of my Father.

The Father commands, and the Son gladly obeys. Think again, for what? That we might be snatched from the brink of hell, to live with God in heaven. Will you perish after this? Will not such love draw us to God?

SECTION XLIV.

Chap. x. ver. 19—30.

DIVERS OPINIONS OF CHRIST.

19. There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.

20. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?

21. Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil: can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

22. And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.

23. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.

24. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him,

How long dost thou make us to doubt ? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

In answer, he says he had told them, and that his miracles spoke plainly enough for him. And he farther tells them, and us, that the cause of unbelief is in ourselves, and arises from the hardness of our own hearts.

25. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

26. But ye believe not; because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

They had not teachableness and simplicity enough to qualify them for believing. Christ's sheep are willing to hear, and to be governed by him; all others are wild and untractable. He knows this of them, whatever they think of themselves, or however they may appear to men.

27. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.

If any think eternal life worth anything, let them come to Christ. He gives nothing less! If they can secure it to themselves without him, or give themselves anything better, then let them turn a deaf ear to him.

29. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

This was the reward of Christ's sufferings, and all that he desired, that he might be the Father's gift to his sheep. But this grant does not take place, unless we give ourselves irrevocably to him; and then we are his, in spite of men or devils. And farther, we are given to Christ to be washed in his blood, purified by his Spirit, and presented in his spotless righteousness to the Father.

30. I and my Father are one

In essence, power, and will. Put the words, "I and my

Father," into the mouth of any creature, the greatest prophet, or highest angel; and the absurdity and blasphemy of them will immediately appear. The Jews understood him in the obvious and strict sense: and if they had misapprehended his words, he would have been one of the worst of men, if he had not told them plainly, how much he abhorred their mistake.

SECTION XLV.

Chap. x. ver. 31—42.

THE MALICE OF THE JEWS.

31. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

32. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

33. The Jews answered him saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

34. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

35. If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken:

36. Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

37. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

38. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

The Jews accused Christ of blasphemy, for saying, he was the Son of God. He answered them, that their Scriptures call princes, and magistrates, gods; and that though considered in his human nature, yet as sanctified and sent of God, he had a better title to the appellation than those to whom the Scriptures gave it: at the same

time not retracting from what he had said, and what they understood him to say, of his essential unity with God; but expressly asserting and confirming it, by proclaiming his power of doing the works of his Father, and that in virtue of his union with him.

39. Therefore they sought again to take him; but he escaped out of their hand.

He escaped with no other design but to do good elsewhere, and to give himself up to them at a proper time.

40. And went away again beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

41. And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.

They were fully convinced of the truth of John's testimony concerning Christ, by his miracles. But what did John testify of him? That he is "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world:" and that he baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

42. And many believed on him there.

Believing on Christ, is believing on Christ for the remission of sins, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as the way to eternal life. God grant that all who are here, capable of exercising faith, may so believe on him!

SECTION XLVI.

Chap. xi. ver. 1—15.

CHRIST AND THE SISTERS OF LAZARUS.

1. Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

2. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

3. Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

Christ says to each of us in effect, Art thou sick? And do I not love thee? Apply to him, call upon him, trust in him. If it were for thy body, thou wouldest have such a physician at any rate.

4. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

The sickness was not for Lazarus's continuance in death: and farther, that is no death in Christ's account, which he is happily to raise us from. "But for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby:" namely, in our belief of him. But to what end do we know this, if we do not seek to him for help in our own case, if he has no power in us, and gets no glory by our conversion?

5. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

He loved them with a peculiar affection. What an unspeakable happiness was this! If I were to be asked, who were some of the most renowned persons in history, I should say Lazarus, and his sisters. And yet Christ's love to *all* passeth knowledge. Let us not lose it for the world. And, O! that we might burn with desire to have a chief place in his love!

6. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

That Lazarus might die before he came. His sisters would have had him come to prevent it, but he knew better what he had to do. Learn from hence to leave all to him. His own time and way are best, and his help is not the less sure for being delayed.

7. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again.

8. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee: and goest thou thither again?

They thought of nothing but the danger: he thought of nothing but the glory of God, in the salvation of souls.

9. Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If

any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

10. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

In these verses, he gives them to understand, that, like all other men, he had a time assigned him, in which to do his work, and he must not lose any of it. This is the wisdom we must learn of him, to think for what purpose the short day of our life was given us, and how fast it is spending.

11. These things said he: and after that, he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may wake him out of sleep.

There was but one way whereby Lazarus could become entitled to this glorious and happy distinction; and the Scripture informs us how we may all become such friends of Jesus, as to be saved by him from eternal death. Let us mark the word *sleepeth*; so he teaches us to think and speak of a happy death.

12. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.

13. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

14. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

15. And I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there, (to the intent ye may believe,) nevertheless, let us go unto him.

He says this to *us*, and to the intent that *we* may believe in him. The miracle and their belief of it, is nothing to us, but as we believe, and apply it, for ourselves. He has a work to do in us; till we believe this, and come to him for it, whatever else we believe of him is in vain.

SECTION XLVII.

Chap. xi. ver. 16—27.

THE DEATH OF LAZARUS.

16. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

He meant that Jesus was running himself upon certain death, but that, whatever happened, he was ready to die with him.

17. Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

When he first comes to men, he finds all in a dead state. Let us think how long we have been lying in it; but let not this hinder us from thinking greatly of his power.

18. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:

19. And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

20. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

O! for a will to meet Jesus in humble faith, and trouble of soul, for his comfort! Did this hour ever come with us?

“But Mary sat still in the house.” Who can tell why Martha went to meet him, and Mary did not? Mary seems to have been higher in faith and love, and yet she sat still in the house; perhaps she was superior, in the excellent grace of patient waiting.

21. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

If we speak Martha’s words, with Martha’s faith, Lord! if thou art with us, we shall live.

22. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

We know that this same Jesus is our advocate with the Father, and now interceding for us at the right hand of God.

23. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

24. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

Her belief of this great article of faith would be confirmed beyond all doubt, when she saw the power of Jesus in restoring her brother to life again; and the several particulars of this transaction are set before us, for our belief and assurance.

25. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

Christ is the resurrection and the life. 1st. As overcoming death in his own person. 2ndly. As the author and cause of a happy resurrection, by raising us first from our death in sin.

Christ hath taught us already what to call the death of a believer in him, it is a falling asleep: and he lies down in his grave as in a bed, to awake the same man, with the same life, in the morning of the resurrection.

26. And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?

Whosoever he be that so believeth on Jesus Christ, as to get true life from him, "shall never die:" he does not die under a sentence of death. The curse is removed from him, and the life he has received from Christ will be continued for ever, and completed in heaven.

"Believest thou this?"—Be not deceived. Let each put this question home to himself: hear it from Christ's mouth. Do I believe, not only that he is the resurrection, and the life, but that he must be the resurrection and the life to *me*? And do I indeed come to him for this end, that by faith in him, and the newness of life that follows it, I may be entitled to a blessed resurrection, and be qualified to participate in its blessings.

27. She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

She had faith in herself, and could give a right answer at once. Here then we must ground ourselves. It is in vain to fly to our good hearts, and good meanings, instead of Christ. This is sad work, and we are miserably in the dark, till we can say, "Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God."

SECTION XLVIII.

Chap. xi. ver. 28—44.

LAZARUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

28. And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

There is a sense in which he calleth now for every one of us, and is ready for us with all his blessings. What should we have thought of Mary, if she had not come? How long will the heart be deaf to the gracious calls of Christ?

29. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

See here what we should do, when Christ calls us by his ministers.

30. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

31. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she arose up hastily, and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

32. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him,

she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

See where we should be, in faith, and the humble prostration of our souls, namely, at the feet of Jesus.

33. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

As man, he was not without natural affection; and the outward expressions of it were in him, as in other men. Trouble therefore on proper occasions, and especially for the death of friends, is not sinful, when it is moderate: and without doubt all the affections of the holy Jesus were in perfect subjection to the order of grace. But we may profitably view this passage in another light. He might be, and was, affected with the death of Lazarus, and the concern of his sisters. But at the same time he knew that he was about to raise him from the dead; and therefore we may suppose his groaning and trouble here, and sorrow, (verse 35, "Jesus wept,") were chiefly from another cause, namely, the piercing view he had of sin, the cause of death, and all our miseries, and of the eternal death, to which obstinate sinners are doomed. When did he hear any groan from us for ourselves?

34. And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

35. Jesus wept.

36. Then said the Jews, Behold, how he loved him!

Nay, but let us think again, how he loved all, and showed it by more than groans and tears.

37. And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

He soon showed them that he could do more. We are never such enemies to our own peace, as when, with the Jews, we doubt of the power of Jesus.

38. Jesus therefore again groaning in himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

39. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh : for he hath been dead four days.

Here she had a little forgotten her own confession, and who it was, whom she called Lord.

40. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God ?

Why do we not see more of the glory of God in our own conversion, but because we do not believe ? And why do we not believe, but because we have no desire to experience any such work in ourselves ?

41. Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

Think you see him in the very action and posture of lifting up his eyes, upon this solemn occasion. Consider too that the matter of his thanksgiving was a benefit conferred on man ; and that he had not only Lazarus, but multitudes, in his eye and heart.

42. And I knew that thou hearest me always : but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

Jesus said this for our sakes too ; and if we do not believe, these words will rise up in judgment against us.

43. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

Sinner, when thou hearest this voice, it will be as powerful for thy coming out of thy dead state.

44. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes : and his face was bound about with a napkin.

We need not fear to see our natural state in this picture.

44. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

So he saith of every believer, loose him from the bond of

sin, the condemnation and the power of it. God be merciful to us, and bring us to the freedom of Christ.

SECTION XLIX.

Chap. xi. ver. 45—57.

THE JEWS CONSPIRE AGAINST CHRIST.

45. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

We have this evidence, and a great deal more, before us; and we believe on him when we confess his power, and fly to it for the life of our souls.

46. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

Is it possible they should have been more hardened by the miracle they had just seen? Yes, every unbeliever is an instance of this; and if Jesus does not open our eyes, he seals us up in blindness; (ix. 39.) Just as the same heat of the sun softens wax, and hardens clay.

47. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.

What are we doing, to let him go on in this manner? And they did just the very reverse of what they should have done. Instead of considering the nature, and design of his miracles, they resolved at once to destroy him. We may venture to say, that those who are not convinced by him now, have the same enmity to him.

48. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.

They supposed that Christ's aim in all he did was to make himself a king, and that it would give occasion to the Romans to extirpate them utterly. They spoke what others

only think. If we receive Christ, this or that inconvenience will follow. It is the world, therefore, that shuts him out of our hearts.

49. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

50. Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

In their sins, not by the Romans. He meant one thing, and, as we are told in the following verse, the Holy Ghost, overruling his tongue, meant another, and made him utter a truth of the greatest importance.

51. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

52. And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad.

St. John, by the same Spirit, which spake in Caiaphas, guards against a mistake of his words. Let not any one therefore think, says he, that Christ died only for the single nation of the Jews: his death reaches to all parts of the world, and faith in it makes all, wheresoever dispersed, the children of God in one body. It is every one's great concern, to know whether it has reached *him* in its efficacy, and transforming, and saving power.

53. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

54. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence into a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

O! that he may ever continue with us to the close of our lives, by the presence and influences of his Holy Spirit.—
Edit.

55. And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.

56. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?

57. Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.

These persecutors of the blessed Jesus are now awaiting the judgment day of God. God grant that we may not on that day be condemned because of our unbelief.

SECTION L.

Chap. xii. ver. 1—9.

MARY ANOINTETH CHRIST'S FEET.

1. Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

His time was come, and he now freely puts himself in the road to his death. This love should be remembered. The soul that has found its own death, knows something of it.

2. There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

Lazarus had been raised from the dead, and there can be no harm in supposing that St. John here shows us the glory and happiness of the state of believers after the resurrection, in his sitting at the table with Jesus. It is Christ's own description of that state, Luke xxii. 30. Martha, it is said, served. She is represented as only in the way; and that she had not yet attained. Look at this pattern. Serving is our present duty, and it is happiness enough on this side the grave.

3. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

4. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

5. Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

We may take occasion from hence to consider the motives of our actions, and how apt we are to deceive ourselves with specious pretences.

6. This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

7. Then said Jesus, Let her alone; against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

Not that she intended it for that use, but it was so in effect; and this was said chiefly to give the disciples warning of his approaching death; an event of which they little thought.

8. For the poor always ye have with you, but me ye have not always.

This carries a command in it. Christ, though not present in person, always has his receivers in the world.

9. Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

Let us observe the effect of the miracle; it could not but excite curiosity in many, to see not only Jesus, but *the man on whom it was wrought*. There are in the Gospels, three instances of this kind, recorded as examples of faith, and dear respect to Christ. What acts of love have we showed him? What have we ever done to testify our gratitude to him? We may not have the costly ointment to bestow upon him, we cannot now wipe his feet with our hairs, but we may *own* him in his truths, *honour* him in our hearts, *love* him in his members, and *throw* ourselves at his feet in obedience, and the sacrifice of our wills to him. Let this be the improvement of this passage of Scripture. What it *recommends* to all is a devoted heart, from a lively faith. What it *reproves* in all, is the coldness of our affec-

tions to Christ. We do little, because we love little; and we do not love because we do not believe how much has been forgiven us.

SECTION LI.

Chap. xii. ver. 10—22.

THE PEOPLE HONOUR CHRIST.

10. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;

Observe the stubbornness of unbelief, and to what desperate lengths it will carry men in wickedness. Millions have put to death for having been instances of the power of Jesus, and it is considered crime enough at all times.

11. Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

This speaks to us. Let us consider the miracle, and see whether it will not hold us to faith in Jesus.

12. On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

13. Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is the man that can say this. Hosanna in the heart, to him that cometh in the name of the Lord, is salvation.

14. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

15. Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

In opposition to the pomp and pride of the world. Be-

hold, therefore, the nature of his kingdom, and what it is that must prove us to be subjects of it. From the manger to the cross, he was the king of meekness and lowliness, and has given us a particular charge to learn them of him. Let each of us know, whoever we are, we must stoop lower; we are still short of our pattern. But why is it said, *fear not*? Because his coming in his own state and majesty would have been terrible to them, as it will be to the world, when he does so come.

16. These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

This is an admirable confession of John. The disciples were in the dark as well as others, about this lowly appearance of Christ. Let us not be discouraged if we do not know all at once. An humble faith refers itself wholly to God, and cannot but be improving in knowledge.

17. The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.

18. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.

St. John takes notice again how wonderfully the miracle wrought on the minds of the people. I verily believe that thousands would desert Christ if it were not for his miracles. But yet they looked for nothing in him but a temporal king, and met him with worldly thoughts. We know better what we are to expect from him.

19. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

Whenever the world does indeed go after Jesus, it will be a happier world than it is. Let us resolve with ourselves to go after him, and allow the world to go where it will.

20. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast:

21. The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.

O! their desire was good. It is a happy time with us when we desire to see Jesus, in his bestowments of forgiveness, of grace, and of love; and if we know him in his salvation here, we shall see him in glory.

22. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.

As the gospel was to be tendered first to the Jews, Christ was not easy of access to men of other nations. This was the reason why the disciples would not introduce them to him, without his leave. Blessed be God, the case is happily altered, and the way to him is now open to all.

SECTION LII.

Chap. xii. ver. 23—30.

GOD BEARS TESTIMONY TO JESUS.

23. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

In his death, resurrection, ascension, sending the Holy Ghost, and consequent gathering of all nations to him.

24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

Christ's death, like a corn of wheat, (take notice, not any grain in general,) should have its increase in the conversion of men to him in all parts of the world. But he goes a step farther, and under the same similitude shows the nature of true conversion.

25. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

He that loveth his life more than Christ, or gives the preference in his esteem to this world, and its advantages, shall lose it eternally: and he that hateth his life in this world, by dying to the world in will and affection, for the hope that is set before him in Christ, shall keep it unto eternal life.

26. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

Let him follow me in the way marked out for all, if he will serve me. "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." Both the duty and reward are now before us. Think what honour from God is, and whether it will not be an abundant recompence, for all we can do, or suffer, in this world.

27. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

O! that we might have some touch, or feeling, upon our spirits of that, of which Christ had such a sharp, piercing sight; as he was then going to bear the malignity and curse of sin! How shall we lie under the weight of it for ever! There is a whole volume of instruction in these few words of the blessed Jesus: "Now is my soul troubled."

28. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

God the Father says, "I have glorified it," by sending Christ into the world for the redemption of mankind, and owning Christ for my Son, by miracles; and now the third time, by a voice from heaven. "And will glorify it again" by his death; and the glory that shall follow in his resurrection, and intercession at the right hand of God, and in his recovery of souls to me, his heavenly Father. The thought which here offers itself, is, God's love to man. The manifestation of it by Christ, he calls his glory. Blessed God! thy nature is thy glory, whether we glorify thee by our conversation, or not.

29. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.

30. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.

And for our sakes it was recorded, that the name of God might be glorified in us, by our honouring and accepting of the Son.

SECTION LIII.

Chap. xii. ver. 31—41.

CHRIST EXHORTS US TO WALK IN THE LIGHT WHILE WE
HAVE IT.

31. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

Now is the trial, to whom this world shall belong. "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out," from his possession of the souls of men, and his dominion over them. We are Christ's by purchase, and may be his by our own free choice.

32. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

The guilt of sin, which was Satan's right and power in us, was expiated by Christ in his death; and without the removal of this grand obstacle, there could be no access to him, or to God by him. Certainly this is a very happy alteration in the condition of mankind; but then, observe, it is by the sole mercy of God, and by the merits of Christ: and could not possibly be by any will or works of our own. Is the question still to ask, whose are we, and whether we have been drawn to Christ in the exercises of humility, self-knowledge, and faith?

33. This he said, signifying what death he should die.

34. The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever : and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up ? who is this Son of man ?

We are told what his lifting up was, and how he who was lifted up, “ abideth ever ;” and therefore our ignorance will be less excusable than theirs. He could not so well explain the matter to them, before his death ; but he proceeds to advise them, and in them all others, to know their opportunity, and to make use of the light while they have it.

35. Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you : for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

36. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

Let the world pretend what it will, humble believers are the children of God’s light ; and all others, with all their advantages and improvements, of nature and education, are in the grossest darkness.

37. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him :

Here we read our own condemnation, if we do not believe. They are told us for this end, and if they do not open our eyes, it is owing to the same hardness of heart in *us*, as in *them*.

38. That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ?

How few in every place, have believed this report ? What are we, who now hear this ! Are we baptized heathens, or new men in Christ, by the power of a divine faith ?

39. Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

40. He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart ; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

They would not see when they might, and being left to

themselves could not see if they would. We need not wade any farther into this depth, and may employ ourselves better in searching into our own hearts.

41. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

That is, of Christ. But in the passage referred to, Isaiah, chapter vi., the prophet evidently speaks of God; and therefore the conclusion is undeniable, that Christ is God.

SECTION LIV.

Chap. xii. ver. 42—50.

CHRIST DEMANDS CONFESSION OF FAITH.

42. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

The fear of man, and the love of truth, cannot dwell together.

43. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

This is a grievous charge, but very common, and may be our own case. As we dread everlasting shame from Christ, let us never think what men will say, when we are convinced what we ought to do.

44. Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

Whatever men may think, there is no way of believing on God, but by believing on Christ. It is impossible that we should know anything of him truly, but as he has revealed himself.

45. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

But what is seeing Christ? It is not seeing him with our bodily eyes; for those who did were no better for that sight. It is therefore receiving him into our hearts by faith, seeing him in the beauty and glory of his salvation, and in him all the mercy and love of God.

46. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

Observe, he says, *abide*, therefore we are first in darkness, the darkness of sin. None know this so well as those who are brought into the light. They see both states, and by what they are, know what they were.

47. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

I do not give him up instantly to condemnation, who hears my words, and does not believe in me. I came not to judge the world, though it is always ripe for judgment, and I justly might: but to declare God's mercy to sinners of mankind, to put them in the way of it, and to make their salvation possible, by dying for them. O my soul! now is thy day of grace; bless thy God, that it is allowed thee, and know that the time of judgment is come.

48. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

The word of Christ shall be the rule of his condemnation; and the justice of his sentence will then be dreadfully manifest to his conscience, from that very word which he now despiseth.

49. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

We have no doubt of this. We believe that Christ's words, are God's words, the light of heaven, the soul's guide, health, and sweetness: and yet how many shut their

eyes, and harden their hearts against them, year after year, till they drop into everlasting darkness. O ye careless ones! be astonished at yourselves, that you should know, and prize them, so little as you do.

50. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

Whatever Christ spoke by commandment from him, is the sole way to everlasting life. And he said, "I know," that we might say it too. There are only two or three short questions to ask. Do you know? Do you believe? Do you gladly hear the Father speaking by Christ, and get life from what you know and believe?

SECTION LV.

Chap. xiii. ver. 1—11.

CHRIST EXHORTETH TO HUMILITY.

1. Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

And how did he show this? By putting them in the way of being good, and especially, by teaching them to condescend to the meanest offices for the good of others. Christ's love is true love. He aims at our happiness; and the great end of all his teaching is, that we may not mistake it. If we choose any other way, Jesus himself cannot help us.

2. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;

Why is this mentioned here? Perhaps, to show that he was still willing to do all for Judas that could be done;

and, if it were possible, to melt his stubborn heart, by this astonishing act of lowliness, in washing his feet. And take notice, that the devil's power in any man, is no excuse for his wickedness. If a man suffers a thief to enter his house, when he can keep him out, whose fault is it, if he cuts his throat?

3. Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

This cuts off at once every pretence for not imitating him. Who can be so great? Who can stoop lower?

4. He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Let us in our thoughts accompany him in these several particulars. Let us imagine we see the Lord of life putting himself in the condition of a servant. It would be well for us if we had this picture always before our eyes.

6. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

Who could help saying what Peter did? And yet the shame was not in our Lord's abasing himself: it is in our not doing it.

7. Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

It is an excellent temper, and would save us many a pang, to give ourselves, as it were, blindfold to Christ, assuredly believing that we are safe in his hands, and shall one day know the meaning of all he has been doing for us. Peter soon knew, ver. 12. Let us not think it much to wait.

8. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

If this washing, and the instruction conveyed by it, had

not its effect, in bringing him to the same disposition, he should have no part with him.

9. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

Every true Christian is certainly of Peter's mind, and thinks he can never have too great a share in Christ, and his washing.

10. Jesus saith to them, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

We are clean washed from the guilt of sin in Christ's blood, when we believe in him; but he has a farther work to do in us, and must cleanse us from the defilements which we are apt to contract in our journey through the world; we must be cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

Can he say of us, "Ye are clean?" Would not our hearts be ready to die within us, to hear him saying, Ye are not clean? But when did we come to him for cleansing? When did we see our need of it?

11. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

This word he *knew*, should alarm us. He knows this hour what we are doing in the world, how our hearts stand affected towards him, and whether any true prayers ever come from them.

SECTION LVI.

Chap. xiii. ver. 12—30.

HE EXHORTS TO IMITATE HIM.

12. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

Thou, (O minister of Christ,) who art concerned, observe the order in which thou art to teach; be ready to wash the feet of all, show thyself a pattern of humility: first stoop, and then speak.

“ Know ye what I have done to you ?” What is the intent and purpose of it. O ! it was a most forcible manner of instruction, a charming lesson of universal, humble condescension for the sake of souls, and doubtless, went deep into their hearts. But when you hear these words, carry your thoughts farther. What has he done for you in other particulars, in all respects; and what can you say he has done *in* you ?

13. Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

14. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

Who can add to this? Or where shall we find words to enforce so perfect, so speaking a pattern of humility ?

15. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

It must, it must be done. What are we, what can we possibly think of ourselves, if we stand out against such an example ?

16. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

Lord ! Not greater ! O shame to all the pride of man !

17. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

By abounding in all offices of humble love for the spiritual good of others; and, if need be, of washing their feet. The stress does not lie so much in the letter, as in the spirit of the command. Obedience to it will lead us to happiness, and the temper here required is happiness in itself.

18. I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but,

that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

Christ's benefits, and our profession of him, will be a dreadful aggravation of our enmity to him. Lifting up the heel against him is not peculiar to Judas; every disobedient man does it.

19. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

His prediction of it would be a great means of confirming them in the belief of him. Judas had carried himself so closely, that the other disciples never suspected him; but he had an all-seeing eye upon him. If we cannot hide ourselves from that, we do nothing.

20. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.

He had made them fit to be sent, by his washing; and now fortifies them with this view of the greatness of their office, and warns all others of the danger of not receiving them.

21. When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, That one of you shall betray me.

“Jesus was troubled in spirit,” not for the consequence of Judas' treachery to himself, but from a deep sense of the power of sin in man, and for the loss of a soul.

22. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.

And well they might be all amazement, to hear that any of their company could be guilty of so black a crime.

23. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.

This was St. John himself. None knew better than he

how great an honour this was, and yet his modesty would not suffer him to mention his name.

24. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.

25. He then, lying on Jesus' breast, saith unto him, Lord, who is it ?

26. Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

In preference to the rest. Can we be mistaken in supposing that this was intended to work upon him, to bring him to contrition and repentance ?

27. And after the sop, Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

The more kindness was shown to Judas, and the more calls he had, the more he was hardened ; and now was Satan's time for taking full possession of him. He was given up to the wickedness of his own heart, and must run headlong into destruction. Jesus was ready to suffer. We see in this man what we are, when all restraining grace is gone.

28. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.

Except John, and he but imperfectly.

29. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast ; or, that he should give something to the poor.

30. He then, having received the sop, went immediately out ; and it was night.

Thus Judas parted with the friendship of Christ, and a good conscience, and renounced the company of Christ's disciples, and lent himself to become the betrayer of Jesus.—*Edit.*

SECTION LVII.

Chap. xiii. ver. 31—38.

HE BIDS HIS DISCIPLES TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

31. Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

Jesus spake these words not immediately upon the going out of Judas after supper that evening, but some time the next morning after cock-crowing; for else there would have been a morning, after cock-crowing, before St. Peter's denial of him, verse 38. "Now is the Son of man glorified," and in him every son of man who chooses it. Observe, his inconceivable sufferings, and accursed death, were nothing to him; nay, he accounts them part of his glory. So dear was our salvation to him! "And God is glorified in him," by his oblation of himself for the redemption of mankind from sin and misery.

32. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

By raising him from the dead, and giving him all power in heaven and earth, for our benefit. Let us consider, that God is glorified, and Christ is glorified, in the manifestation of that rich goodness, which is the glory of the Divine nature, and always the same in itself, whether we are better for it, or not. How could God stoop lower, than by speaking of our salvation and recovery, as his glory? How can we rise higher than by suffering it to take place in us? If it is not our steady aim, and great wish that it may, let our hearts tell us so this moment.

33. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall

seek me : and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come : so now I say to you.

You cannot come immediately ; he had a work for them to do first. Either we can go to him now, or we cannot. What are we doing ? Is our work finished ? Is it in good forwardness ? Is it begun ?

34. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

And how did he love us ? By laying down his life for us. This takes in all the properties of charity mentioned in 1 Cor. chap. xiii. Whenever we are called to lay down our lives for the spiritual good of others, not one of them can be wanting. The words are plain, but the duty is hard ; and can have no place but in a regenerate soul, warmed with a sense of redeeming mercy. The human heart, in its natural state, is too cold a soil for this heavenly plant to grow in. But why does he call this a new commandment ?

1st, In respect to the degree of love required. Perhaps it was never so understood before.

2ndly, It was a new, or most peculiar command, in respect of the stress laid upon it.

3rdly, In respect of their ability to fulfil it. 1 John ii. 7, 8.

Let us think whether it is not quite new to some of us, and whether we are not amazed to hear it.

35. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

If we have, we are happy at once, with heaven in our hearts. But will not our baptism, christian profession, and a tolerably smooth life, be a sufficient proof in this case ? No, nothing but such love as his ; and whatever the world sees in us, or thinks of us, hereby we must know ourselves to be his disciples. Here beneficent actions will put in their claim. But they are an easy substitute for

love in the heart, and may be nothing but an artifice to quiet conscience in the want of it, a bait for applause, or a tribute paid to self. One single consideration might set us right on this point. What concern do we feel, what means do we use, for the salvation of others?

36. Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

What Christ had said, "Whither I go ye cannot come," seems to have made a deeper impression on Peter, than the "new commandment." He tells Peter, "the time is not yet," and he further intimates that Peter was not fit for the duty. But he tells him that he should follow him afterwards, to heaven, by martyrdom.

37. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

Peter was a warm, sincere man, but promised too liberally on his own account, and failed wretchedly in the trial. Lord, keep us ever mindful of our weakness, that we may fly to thy strength, and be enabled to stand in the hour of temptation.

38. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

O Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.—*Edit.*

SECTION LVIII.

Chap. xiv. ver. 1—11.

CHRIST COMFORTS HIS DISCIPLES.

1. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

Thus Christ, in effect, speaks to all; this is blessed encouragement to every fainting soul; and with these words we should arm ourselves in afflictions, or desertions, and especially against the accusations of conscience. "Believe in me," for the forgiveness of sins, regeneration to newness of life, and future glory. The man who is in earnest to save his soul, believes in the *all* of Christ, his commands, example, quickening power, and eternal rewards, as well as forgiveness; and what he believes, he desires, and hopes to obtain, he endeavours after, and prays for.

2. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

In my Father's house are mansions for many, even for all whose hearts are set upon them. "If it were not so, I would have told you." He cannot deceive us, we may safely rely on his word; sinners as we are, heaven can receive us.

"I go to prepare a place for you," by taking possession of heaven in the human nature, for the human nature. Blessed Jesus! prepare us for it, and support us with this hope.

3. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also.

One is as sure as the other. But this is no comfort, except to his faithful followers. O that we longed for his coming, and had a burning desire to be with him, in love to him, and chiefly for his own sake!

4. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

We know both better than they did then. We live when all is fully opened. Let us know our advantages, and bless God for them.

5. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

The ignorance of Thomas, becomes a benefit to us. His question drew from Christ such an answer as is worthy of our notice, and which can make us wise unto salvation.

6. Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Christ is the *way* of holiness, the *way* of happiness, the *way* to heaven, and the only *way*: the *truth* of God, in his discoveries of himself to man, his commands, promises, and threatenings: and the *life* of our souls, in their redemption from death by the sacrifice of himself, and from their dead state by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." To the knowledge of Christ here, or the enjoyment of him hereafter, but by faith, and by faithful obedience to him.

The great design of this whole discourse, to the end of the seventeenth chapter, was to establish the apostles, and all others, in the faith of Him, in all his offices.

7. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

In the full manifestation of his nature, power, and will, by me. This knowledge of God all may have, and when it is spiritual and effectual, it is the same to all intents and purposes as seeing him: and Christ here teaches us to call it so.

8. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

9. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

10. Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father

in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

11. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

Let it be carefully observed, how often he appeals to his works, or miracles, as a proof of his divine mission. So long as we keep ourselves on this ground, we shall be steady in our belief of Christ; we shall receive whatever he teaches, and whatever he commands, and hope for every thing which he promises.

SECTION LIX.

Chap. xiv. ver. 12—17.

HE ENCOURAGES TO PRAYER.

12. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

He would send down the Holy Ghost, by which the apostles, especially, would be enabled to do greater works than he himself did, chiefly in the conversion of greater numbers. That work was the fruit of his ascension, and the Holy Spirit is always doing it in the world; indeed the recovery of every single sinner to God, is a greater miracle than any which Christ performed upon the bodies of men. Nothing so fatally keeps us out of the way of Christ's power, and from a state of prayer, as thinking this recovery is an easy matter. If we have never applied to Christ, under a clear conviction of the necessity of this work, and of our own helplessness, we have neither faith in him, nor strength from him, and are no better to this hour than we have been able to make ourselves.

13. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

That is, whatever ye ask believing in me, through whom alone your prayers will be accepted.

Until we believe, we cannot pray according to the will of God, in the possession of self-knowledge, and with a true desire for the blessings of the gospel. "That will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son," by granting all our petitions, and bringing us to salvation through him. Our conversion to God, by Christ, is called his glory, because till then we are the stain and blemish of his creation. Let not this pass without notice.

14. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.

He repeats it for our direction, and assurance ; and says again, "I will do it." Who can hear and answer all our prayers, but God ?

15. If ye love me, keep my commandments.

This is only saying in other words, if ye love me, love yourselves. Nothing can give rest to our souls, without keeping them, especially in love to him. The not keeping them is the plague of our natures, and the bane of all happiness. Obedience to this one commandment of love, would make the world a paradise.

16. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ;

Let us ask our hearts, whether they desire he should thus pray for us ? Are the comforts of the Holy Ghost, peace with God, a will to obey him, and the hope of eternal life, our own great prayer ? Let us bring ourselves to this test. Christ was about to leave his disciples, yet he would be always present with them, in the power of his Spirit.

17. Even the Spirit of truth ; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him : but ye know him ; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

"The Spirit of truth," shows us the truth of our state of sin, manifests to our consciences the truth of God for our recovery, brings us into the truth, and keeps us in it.

“Whom the world cannot receive,” while it is the world; the world lying in wickedness; no man while the world is uppermost in his heart. The world we so much love, and live for, stands in direct opposition to him, and the heavenly nature he comes to raise in us.

“Because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him,”—has no sense of his benefits, nor desire of his operations.

“But ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” To know him, in his abiding influences, is *to see* him. How happy shall we be if each one of us can say, I *see* him plainly in his work upon my heart!

SECTION LX.

Chap. xiv. ver. 18—24.

CHRIST PROMISES THE COMFORTER.

18. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

Let us note this. Why are we joyless, and comfortless all our lives, without knowing why, or ever asking the reason of it, but because he never came to us?

19. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

We may see Christ, if we please, in his salvation. Let us catch at this promise,—see ourselves undone without him, and then we shall be in pain for a saving sight of him.

“Because I live, ye shall live also.” His resurrection is our resurrection, his life is our life, when we are in him by faith. We live by him, and shall live with him.

20. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

The apostles in Christ, by the power of miracles in them: they, and all others, by faith and conversion. There

is no being a Christian without attaining to this knowledge.

21. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

We have Christ's commandments, but how do we keep them? There is no avoiding this: without the offering up of our wills to Christ in obedience, whatever we pretend, there can be no love to him.

“And he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father.” This promise furnishes a great motive for love and obedience! Is this nothing to you? Ponder these words, and think what it is to live and die, with, or without, the Father's love. “And I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” In the increase of his light and love.

22. Judas saith unto him, (not Iscariot,) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

Judas seems to have been under the common mistake of the Jews, as to the manner of Christ's manifesting himself.

23. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

If a man love Christ, he will, and can keep his words: for nothing but love does, or can keep them. Here Jesus puts love first, as the root and cause of a lively, unfailling, universal obedience. This is beginning our work in the way Christ orders, and now it will prosper in our hands. “We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” It was the great end of Christ's coming into the world, that he might make his followers again the living temples of God.

24. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye have heard is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

How shall we attain to that love of Christ, which makes

our obedience acceptable to God, and easy and pleasant to ourselves? Answer: by a sense of his love to us, in our redemption, and not otherwise. Both St. Paul and St. John give this answer, Rom. v. 5: "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." And St. John says, in his first Epistle, iv. 19, "We love him, because he first loved us."

SECTION LXI.

Chap. xiv. ver. 25—31.

CHRIST LEAVES HIS PEACE WITH HIS DISCIPLES.

25. These things I have spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

26. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The things which Christ taught them are upon record in their writings, for our benefit. But still this is not enough. Whatever we learn from them or remember savingly, is by the Holy Ghost. And farther, he is always ready to do his office in us; and if we are ignorant, or forgetful of saving truth, it is because we do not put ourselves in his hands.

27. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Christ leaves to his disciples a most inestimable gift, "peace." Relief from the guilt of sin, which was lying on the conscience, and from the power of it in our hearts. This peace is our best cordial in the troubles of life, and our great support in the hour of death: that which Jesus purchased for us with his blood, and gives his Spirit to

work in us; a peace of God which passeth all understanding, and yet little valued or sought after.

“Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” The men of this world, when they pay us compliment, or wish us peace, mean little by it, and it is, at the best, but a wish: indeed, the world itself is a known cheat, and gives nothing of what it promises, no solid and lasting comfort, nothing but empty hopes, false peace, and ruinous joys. Men, under the gospel, have their choice of this, or the peace of Christ.

“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” They had much to do and suffer, but his peace would enable them to bear up against all.

28. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

Christ says, I go to glory, which I had with him before the world was, John xvii. 5. And Christ says, that he goes away, in order that the Spirit might be sent, chap. xvi. 7. “For my Father is greater than I,” in my present state of humiliation, and before the coming of the Holy Spirit, which will be a greater manifestation of the divine power, and followed with greater effects than you now see.

According to this interpretation, which arises naturally from the context, here is nothing asserted of any difference, or essential inequality, between the Father and the Son. The Father is greater, but only in a certain respect; namely, as sending the Spirit, or greater than the Son in the days of his humanity, and under a lower dispensation. And in this respect, the Son, equally joined with the Father in the act of sending the Holy Spirit, was greater than himself.

29. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

With greater comfort, and assurance; as all do, from the experience of the work of the Holy Spirit in themselves.

30. Hereafter I will not talk much with you : for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

Hereafter “I shall not,” rather than, “will not talk much with you.” He hereby intimates to them, that he was just about to leave them, which they did not well understand. “For the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” No right in me, or power over me, on account of sin ; for which all others die, and must have died eternally, if He who had no sin, had not died for them. O ! let sin go. Let us see here, who governs the world by it, and what is the hold which Satan has of us.

31. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

Jesus showed his love to the Father, as he desires we should show our love to *him*, by keeping his commandments. But let us think, and lay it deeply to heart. Why does he thus magnify his love and obedience, in laying down his life, both freely and by command from the Father ? All this was for the sake of wretched mankind, who were perishing in sin, to deliver them from the curse of it, and to bring them to glory.

“Arise, let us go hence.” From the place where they were to the city of Jerusalem. And what follows in the three next chapters, was another discourse, at another time, namely, at the paschal supper in Jerusalem, and immediately before he went over the brook Cedron. (Chap. xviii. 1.)

SECTION LXII.

Chap. xv. ver. 1—8.

THE PARABLE OF THE VINE AND ITS BRANCHES.

I. I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

Christ, in effect, says, I make glad the heart of man, in a much higher and better sense than the natural vine does. And we must of all necessity be grafted into him, and be preserved in a fruit-bearing state, by the Father.

2. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away : and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Let us observe carefully, not Christ himself, is here the branch, he needed no purging ; but it is spoken of his body, the members. And as parts of him, and receiving vital influence from him, we must and shall be like him, in all things. And further, let us learn, that in order to be in a fruit-bearing state, we must be *in him*.

If we, as branches, bear not fruit, then we perish. Our baptism is lost, Christ is lost, our souls are lost for ever.

Who is the Christian ? Answer. The man who is always improving, who has his heart upon Christ's purging, and gives himself wholly up to him for it, refusing no means, however sharp, for that end.

3. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

By his word bringing them to himself. And he says, ye *are* clean, because they were already in him by faith, and he knew they would go on to perfection.

4. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5. I am the vine, ye are the branches : He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me ye can do nothing.

This implies, that with him we can do everything. This is a thunder-clap to all natural men. Both the will, and the deed, are from *him* ; and we can perform nothing like an acceptable obedience, but by union with him in the spirit of regeneration. Those who do, and are willing to do the most, are the most convinced of this. They know that

they could as soon raise a dead body to life, as renew themselves to the image of God, in righteousness, and true holiness: and this knowledge keeps them close to Christ, in faith, prayer, and waiting. All others are blinded, and either think doing to be needless, or take a false measure of themselves, and their work. This one text well applied, is sufficient to bring all men to Christ.

6. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

This is appealing to our sense and practice for the justice and equity of God's proceedings with us. He knows what a useless, dead branch is fit for, and what to do with it, as well as you. If you would escape this sentence, you must knit with the stock.

7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

If this is the case with us, then we *shall* ask, and ask nothing but what we ought, and we shall have whatever we ask. Let us think of a happier condition, if we can imagine any such. Prayer is indeed one fruit of our union with Christ, and without it we can have no other.

8. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

By bearing much fruit, we answer the design of God in our creation; which, speaking after the manner of men, is his glory. And let us take notice, that God is not glorified with the praises of the tongue, without fruit, and much fruit, in the life, from union with Christ.

“So shall ye be my disciples:” not in name only, but in deed, and in truth. He will never alter these words; it is impossible that we should become his disciples in any other way; and therefore we had need to bethink ourselves whether it is our great aim to be fruitful under him.

SECTION LXIII.

Chap. xv. ver. 9—19.

THE LOVE BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES.

9. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

I have loved you with the greatest possible love. (The Father is infinite in his love to the Son, and the Son is infinite in his love to his disciples to the end of the world. —*Edit.*) “Continue ye in my love. Let the sense of it be always warm upon your minds. This is knocking loudly at the door of our hearts. What stubborn things they are, if they can be unmoved with such love as his!

10. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

Then verily we can keep them; we can know what they are, study them, bend our wills to them, and take delight in them, with the help that is afforded us; and without this proof of our love to him, we can have no other; hence if this be wanting, the words of Christ plainly imply, that we do not belong to him.

11. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

Christ's joy was the joy of love and obedience to the Father from a root of love to God, and compassion to men. Our's is the joy of remission completed by obedience; and if they are separated will dwell with neither. He came to put us in possession of it; and if he had known of any other kind of true joy, or any other way of attaining to the fulness of it, he would have told us so.

12. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

This one commandment compriseth all ; for love breaks none, but is all regularity in the life, as well as great joy and sweetness in the heart. Nothing is wanted but unfeigned, universal love, to make us a blessing to ourselves, and to all about us.

13. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Here are two things distinctly mentioned, and carefully to be observed.

1. Though Christ died for all, none can have the benefit of his death, but those whom he vouchsafes to call his friends.

2. None are *his* friends, but those who keep his commandments. He has rich mercy in store for all ; but the generality choose rather to go without it, than to be Christ's friends in his appointed way.

15. Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

Jesus does not call us servants, he has delivered to us all the will of God, and opened his whole heart of love to us, as one friend does to another, for our present peace and everlasting happiness. But if we would reap all the fruits of a blessed friendship, let us not be less his servants on that account.

16. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain : that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Christ chose them to the apostleship ; not to salvation, except by their faith, and choice of him. They were to bring forth fruit in the conversion of sinners. The fruit which the apostles brought forth does remain ; and they are still bringing forth fruit, and will do so to the end of

the world. St. John is now delivering Christ's words to us, and we may be his fruit, if we please. On the warrant of Christ's promise, they would ask for souls, and plead hard for them, in Christ's name.

17. These things I command you, that ye love one another.

Let the repetition of this commandment convince us of its great excellency, and the necessity of it. It is God's image again in us ; we were created in it, and for it, and without it we can neither be happy on earth, nor received into heaven.

18. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

As if he had said, the world hateth me, and will hate you ; but do not therefore abate of your love, any more on that account. Observe, that is no true love which cannot maintain itself against opposition and hatred. This is a hard lesson ; but I had rather learn it of Christ, than be the most esteemed person upon earth.

19. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own : but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

The disciples of Christ, if they know what they are, must not be of the world, any more than the apostles, but forsake it, in will and affection ; and bear their testimony against it ; and when they do, the world will be true to itself, and forsake, hate, and persecute *them*.

SECTION LXIV.

Chap. xv. ver. 20—27.

MEN CANNOT HATE CHRIST WITHOUT DISPLEASEING THE
FATHER.

20. Remember the word that said I unto you, The servant is

not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

Since the Jews persecuted Jesus, he assures them that the same Jews would persecute them also. Men will always be men.

21. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

So long as they are of a worldly, persecuting spirit, whatever they think, or prate of God, however learnedly they analyse his nature, and attributes, they know nothing of him as the God of love, by their own resemblance to him.

22. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

Here is our condemnation. Christ hath spoken to us also; he is speaking to us now; and if we do not hear him, we shall have nothing to plead for ourselves, in excuse for our own neglect of his call to us.

23. He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

This may seem a hard saying. Hating God is a grievous charge. But remember it came from the mouth of him who knew what was in man; and if we do not suffer him to bring us to God, what can be the reason of it, but that we hate him in our hearts?

24. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

They had not had sin, comparatively speaking; or the great sin of unbelief to answer for. It would be a double aggravation of their sin, (as it will be of ours,) that neither Christ's *words*, nor *works*, could prevail with them to own and forsake it. They might have had as perfect knowledge of God, for all the ends of salvation, as revealed by Christ, proving his mission by his miracles, as if they had seen him

with their eyes. Christ sticks to the word *hate*, and would not soften it.

2. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

Not only without a cause, but in spite of the greatest love. He says a little, and leaves us to think a great deal more

26. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me :

According to the tenor of these words, the Holy Ghost is equally the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, sent from both and one with them ; and therefore the Spirit of truth, because he is the eternal Spirit of the Godhead.

“ He shall testify of me :” outwardly, by extraordinary operations ; and inwardly, by his quickening, transforming power. He is an infallible witness for Christ in every converted soul. We can no more change ourselves, than we could make ourselves at the first.

27. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

The apostles did bear witness even unto death. Blessed be God for his grace in them, and that we still have their testimony in our hands, to build us up in the knowledge and love of Christ.

SECTION LXV.

Chap. xvi. ver. 1—11.

CHRIST COMFORTS HIS DISCIPLES.

1. These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.

He said these things, that they might not desert him and his cause, for any hardships, or persecutions; which he here forewarns them they were to expect.

2. They shall put you out of the synagogue: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

This is always the pretence for persecution. This mistaken thought exposes the best men, in every age of the world, to the rage and malice of the worst: and those who serve God least in other respects, are the forwardest to do it effectually in this.

3. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

With respect to the apostles, we own it to be a clear case, that their persecutors could be no other than godless, christless men. But methinks that what is here said might give some check to this unchristian spirit in all. God does not want to be so served; and so far as any give way to it, they are ignorant of God, and of Christ.

4. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

Not having left them to send down the Spirit. He means, that now was the time to apprise them more clearly and fully than ever of the hatred of the world, because they would soon have sufficient support against it, in the spirit with which they should be endowed from on high. Compare ver. 7.

5. But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?

6. But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

As if all their hopes would be gone with him. They were sadly in the dark, and did not yet know how great

a blessing his departure would be to them ; and to all the world.

7. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth : It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

What is this to us, if we do not look for his coming in our own souls ? Come, he must, to every one of us, and abide with us, if ever we are made alive unto God. Let us hear what his office is in the next words.

8. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment :

9. Of sin, because they believe not on me ;

10. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more ;

Unbelief is total ignorance of God, and ourselves, and it effectually keeps us from God.. It is all blindness in the heart, and all perverseness in the will ; and besides its own sinfulness, it binds all other sins upon us, and leaves us under their power. Has the Spirit been at work with us here ? Has he convinced us of sin, and showed us how the guilt of it is to be taken away ?

The Spirit will convince men of “righteousness,” what it is ; that is, of Christ’s righteousness, which is accepted of God, and imputed to believers. We must have a perfect righteousness wherein to appear before God, and there never was a perfect righteousness, but His. “Because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.” Christ’s being in heaven, and sending down the Spirit, would be full proof to the world of his righteousness, and of God’s approbation of him, notwithstanding his sufferings as a malefactor.

11. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

He must quit his possession of us, and yield to Christ. And the devil is only so far judged in us, as we suffer the Spirit to sit in judgment upon our lusts, and to purify our hearts.

Upon the whole, mark the order of the Spirit's work, in our conversion. He brings us by conviction of sin to faith, and by faith to holiness. Thousands, alas! never come to the first.

SECTION LXVI.

Chap. xvi. ver. 12—22.

THE SPIRIT PROMISED.

12. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

Alas! how should we, without the same Spirit enabling us?

13. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come.

He will guide not the apostles only, but all, into all saving truth, savingly. "But whatsoever he shall hear," as the Spirit of God, and of Christ, acting from, and in union with them. "And he will shew you things to come." We may warrantably apply this to ourselves, in respect to the invisible things, and future glories of another world, set home upon our hearts.

14. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Observe, "of mine;" the things of Christ; the things which belong to our everlasting peace. This is the knowledge which concerns us, and for which the Spirit is given. He could have shown them the same things, and everything himself; but, behold, without the Spirit's showing, and effectual working, it would have been in vain. Why do

we know little, and do less, but because we do not put ourselves into the hands of the Holy Spirit? What is our great purpose, and daily prayer?

15. All things that the Father hath, are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Hence, therefore, our trust must be equally in the Father, and the Son.

16. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

To manifest himself more fully to them than ever, by the Spirit. They saw him before his ascension, both in his person and power, but did not see him in his power in themselves. This sight of him contains every blessing of the gospel, this they could not have till after his departure, and this we may have to our unspeakable comfort, as well as the apostles.

17. Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

18. They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

We cannot possibly have a more lively representation of the state of mankind, without the Spirit, and before the Spirit was given, than in the dulness and slowness of the disciples.

19. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?

20. Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

21. A woman when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

22. And ye now therefore have sorrow : but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

The different states, and ends of the world, and believers, are worthy of remark. A Christian is in sorrow, but it is in order to joy, which naturally springs out of it, as the joy of a mother from the pains of child-bearing. The men of the world have their joy first, such as it is, that is, they know nothing of the pains of repentance, but their joy leads to sorrow, and ends in remorse.

SECTION LXVII.

Chap. xvi. ver. 23—33.

PRAYER TO GOD THE FATHER IN THE NAME OF CHRIST
WILL BE ACCEPTED.

23. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing ; Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

The disciples would want Jesus in his bodily presence, as a resolver of their doubts, after the day of Pentecost ; but they would have access to the Father, and in his name be heard, and answered, in everything.

24. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name : ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

By asking aright, in the name of Christ, for his blessings, and obtaining what they asked. Earth is not so barren of joy, as we think, if we were but in pursuit of the right kind of joy, namely, the joy of Christ's peace, life, and Holy Spirit.

25. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs : but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.

Whatever the words of Jesus were in themselves, they were proverbs to the disciples, before the event, and for want of spiritual understanding. What has been said from the beginning of the fourteenth chapter, is plain as to the words ; but all is mysterious, till the Holy Spirit opens it to the heart.

26. At that day ye shall ask in my name : and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you :

27. For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came from God.

What can be plainer than this ; that the one way to the love of the Father, is to believe in, and love Christ ? And yet it is a dark saying to all who have not faith, and love.

28. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world ; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

29. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.

30. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee : by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

Jesus had already told them, that they loved him, and believed that he came out from God. Though their belief of him was imperfect, and partly in a wrong sense, nevertheless they did believe. The root of the matter was in them, and they could bear witness to his knowledge in their hearts, and believe in him for it. But let us remember that they were not to rest here in this low degree of faith.

31. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe ?

Some put the words without an interrogation : “Ye do now believe indeed.” He seems, in what follows, to tell them that their faith as yet was but weak, and would soon be tried to purpose.

32. Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall

be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone : and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

He is with every one of us, every moment ; and it is the great design of Christ's religion, to make the thoughts of his presence, and the hope of being with him for ever, the support and comfort of our lives.

33. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.

Hath Christ spoken these words effectually to us ? Is it so indeed ? And are we come to this point with Christ, that as there is no peace but in him, so we will seek it nowhere else ? “ In the world ye shall have tribulation ; ” that is, the servants of Christ, from the opposition of the world ; every man, more or less ; and the more he loves and courts the world, the more trouble and disappointment he will meet from it.

“ But be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.” That in his strength, and after his example, we might overcome it too, and get above the fear which it inspires. Whatever the world does to us, it cannot deprive us of our interest in *him*. O Christian, thou mayest be of good cheer.

SECTION LXVIII.

Chap. xvii. ver. 1—5.

CHRIST PRAYETH TO HIS FATHER TO GLORIFY HIM.

1. These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee :

The blessed Jesus having finished his instructions to the

apostles, and knowing what must give weight and efficacy to them, crowns the whole with solemn prayer; thereby teaching ministers especially, how to enforce their preaching and endeavours, and all to look up to *him*, for a blessing on his word. O Christian, open thy desires to thy heavenly Father, in imitation of so great an example, with the same confidence of being heard; and let the filial trust, and divine simplicity, so remarkable in this prayer, be the model of all thine. Look well to the purity of thy intentions, and spiritual hunger, know thy wants, and then speak thy heart.

“These words spake Jesus,” with a heart full of the deepest concern for the establishment of the apostles, and the salvation of mankind through them. God be praised that we, if we are Christians, are comprised in this sweet prayer; and may God deliver us from the curse of willing against it.

“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.” The recovery of mankind from the lowest depth of sin and misery, to the height of holiness and happiness, is the glory of the Father, and the Son. The next words explain this.

2. As thou hast given him power over all flesh,

To change its nature, and earthly, vicious bent; to govern, sanctify, and bless us, and to crown us with immortal glory.

2. That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

Let us take notice of the expression. We are not given to Christ for salvation, if we do not yield to the Father's drawing, so as to give ourselves to him.

3. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Here is your proof. What is uppermost in our hearts? What do you make your happiness? What do you live

for, the world or eternity? If for the last, you will bless God with all your souls for the infallible direction here given for the attainment of it.

“That they might know thee the only true God.”

1st. As he has revealed himself, as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; not only as our Creator and Preserver, but as our Redeemer and Sanctifier; as our reconciled Father, and just judge. 2ndly. With effect; by living to him according to this knowledge.

“And Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,” to be the Mediator between God and man, and put us in the way to eternal life, by expiating our sins, and purging our natures. God has sent him to call us to holiness, to instruct us in it, to set us a perfect example of it, and to work it in us.

4. I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

It was a hard work he had to do for us; it is a still harder work which he has to do in us. Do you ask what this is? It is to get our hearts changed, and filled with the love of God. And God grant we may be enabled to say for ourselves, at the hour of death, as he did, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”

5. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

“Before the world was,” is the scripture expression for eternity. This is said to teach us what Christ is in himself, “very God of very God,” notwithstanding his humiliation; and we are the basest of creatures, if he is the less our God for it.

SECTION LXIX.

Chap. xvii. ver. 6—16.

CHRIST PRAYS FOR THE APOSTLES.

6. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world : thine they were, and thou gavest them me ; and they have kept thy word.

Christ set forth the name of his Father to the apostles, that they might be instruments of manifesting it to the world : “ his name,” in all the grace and power of it, speaking peace to the conscience, and turning the heart to God. “ They have kept thy word :” knowing certainly that they would, he speaks of it as already done.

7. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

And not they only have known. O happy man ! who-soever thou art, who knowest this by thy own faith and conversion.

8. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me ; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

Have we surely, and effectually believed this ? Life, or death, is in the answer.

9. I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me ; for they are thine.

“ For them,” first, and principally ; and in this part of the prayer for them only, because so very much would depend upon their faith, and fidelity. Though they were given to Christ by God, and belonged to God, they still needed his earnest prayers ; as all do need, both his and their own, in their very best estate, and the better they are, the more they know the need of prayer.

10. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine ; and I am glorified in them.

He, as it were, stands stoutly to his claim of right in the apostles, equally with the Father. As if he said, The Father loveth you, and I do no less. You are his, but not more his than mine. What an opening is here of Christ's love, in these few plain words! It would be matter of great joy to the apostles to hear them; and if we are Christians, it will be our joy also. "And I am glorified in them:" by their belief of me, which furnishes the ability conferred upon them for my service, and their faithful use of it. The wonder is, that he should account anything that man can do, his glory. There is a loud call in the word.

11. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee.

Jesus knew the nature of that world into which he was about to send them, he had an exact foresight of the difficulties which such innocent and holy men must encounter from it; he therefore warns them of the danger, and fortifies them particularly against it by prayer.

11. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

That they may be so joined unto the Lord, as to be one spirit. 1 Cor. vi. 17. One in design, will, and affection, with us, and the same in grace, that we are in nature.

12. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

13. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

Who can tell with what tenderness, and solicitude, he watched over them, to keep them to himself! And all for the sake of a lost world, that we might be brought to him by their means.

Christ says, I speak these things in their hearing, for their instruction, comfort, and assurance; that they may

have my joy fulfilled,—the joy of labouring for souls, in love, joy of the disposition, and of God's approbation.

14. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

“The world hath hated them,” as it always does those who stand out in the true spirit of the word, which discovers the corruption of the world, and causes them to turn their backs upon it.

“Because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Christ was not of the world: the apostles were not of the world; if *we* are, we must not pretend to take our religion from *them*.

15. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

They might be apt to suppose from his saying, “They are not of the world,” that they were soon to be taken out of the world. He prevents their mistake, by signifying to them, that they were still to be in the world, though not of it, as it is under the power of the evil one.

16. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Can Christ say this of us? Are we enslaved to the world, or have we broken off our allegiance to it? May the Lord help us to assure ourselves that we are not of the world.

SECTION LXX.

Chap. xvii. ver. 17—26.

HE PRAYS THE FATHER TO GLORIFY ALL BELIEVERS
WITH HIM.

17. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.

The word of God is nothing else. It is not the word of man, call it reason, if you please. All is darkness and error, with respect to our whole state and nature, God and

the world, life and death, till we are in union with the word, and by it with him who makes it effectual.

18. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

I have sent them well qualified for their office, by being devoted to God ; and with the same authority as I have.

19. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

“ I sanctify myself,” by my obedience unto death. “ That they also might be sanctified through the truth,” or, truly sanctified ; after my example, and by the power of the truth in themselves.

20. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.

Christ here opens all his gracious heart, and prays for all believers ; showing them withal what they must be, and what they should ask for themselves. O ! resolve to be included in this prayer ; reckon that you are, when you can pray truly for yourselves, according to Christ’s prayer here recorded.

21. That they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

The only way in which they can be one in themselves, is, by being one in the Father and in the Son. *In us*, implies this. There may be partial friendships, and worldly associations, but here is a much larger scene opened to us.

If ever all are one, and every believer one with all, it must be in God, through Christ, by the Spirit’s bond of union ; and the perfection of this bond could not possibly be expressed in stronger terms.

Note, here is no room to surmise, as some do, that the union of Christ with the Father, is of a different kind from that of believers with them. The meaning is, that

they may be one in *themselves*, by an influence from us, as *we* are one in everything, by nature.

“That the world may believe that thou hast sent me:” when it sees that to which the world, in its natural state, is an entire stranger, and which nothing but a divine power can effect, namely, a body of men knit together in love, and actuated by one Spirit. This proof of our Christianity, if we had it, would be instead of a thousand arguments to unbelievers. The faithful soul will observe what the religion of the Bible is, and seek to have this proof in himself.

22. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one :

Christ had given to them the glory of being filled with the Spirit, as he was in his humanity, in order to love. And glory it is, if he knows what true glory is, who here repeats it four times for our observation.

“That they may be one, even as we are one.” That as they are one in nature, they may be one in will and affection, as we are one in nature, will, and affection.

23. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. .

“I in them, and thou in me.” The Godhead in Christ, and Christ in the human nature, is its redemption. He is in us with his atonement, righteousness, Spirit,—all he was, did, and suffered.

Jesus rises in his expression, as he proceeds; he desires that the world may not only believe, but *know* the truth of his mission, and the love of God towards the members of Christ, that is, of himself. And this by the greatness of the effect, in all the operations of the Spirit.

24. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am : that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

He now speaks of another kind of glory, for which the

former glory fits us, consummate happiness in the sight and enjoyment of *himself*, in his essential, eternal glory in heaven. *I will*, is too great an expression for a creature to use, in it there is a glimpse of his uncreated glory. Let it also be observed, that though authoritatively, yet he *asks* this great grace for us, of the Father. Then it is grace, and a gift.

25. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

“O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee,” as equally just, and merciful: exacting the penalty of sin, and pardoning the sinner, in Christ, to the glory of all his perfections. The word *righteous* is here used with great propriety. The world, as such, does not, will not know God in this respect. We know that the Father hath sent Christ, when with unfeigned humility, and child-like simplicity, we give ourselves up to Christ’s knowledge of God.

26. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Christ had declared his nature and will, his grace and love. He came to declare and open all to us, and will manifest it with power to our hearts.

“That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” Christ’s love in us, brings God’s love of Christ upon us.

SECTION LXXI.

Chap. xviii. ver. 1—14.

CHRIST IS BETRAYED.

1. When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his

disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.

Christ went forth to meet his sufferings! Let us think of his love, see the accursed nature of sin: see our sin; and in all our sufferings for it, remember that he bore the heaviest part of them.

2. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.

Probably, to meditate on his sufferings, and to prepare himself for them, in the very place where they were to begin. There is a use in this; we know not where trouble will find us, but it is good to be ready for it.

3. Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns, and torches, and weapons.

4. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

He went unto them of his own accord, when he could as easily have gone from them.

5. They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

6. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

It may seem strange that this stroke of Christ's power, did not change their hearts, and make them alter their purpose. But how often does God bring us to the ground, with some heavy trouble or calamity, without effect!

7. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

8. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he. If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.

Just so he offered himself to the justice of God for our preservation. Great comfort may be found in these words, "Let these go their way."

9. That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

10. Then Simon Peter having a sword, drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

Let us learn from hence that our zeal for Christ may be excessive, and especially, that he does not want to have blood shed in his service. After the day of Pentecost, Peter was changed into another man, and could say, "If ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye." 1 Pet. iii. 14.

11. Then said Jesus unto Peter, put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

Christ's was a bitter cup indeed! And why did he not shrink from it? Because his Father put it into his hand. That word, *Father*, well considered, would sweeten everything that befalls us.

12. Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,

They need not to have done it; they could not, if our sins had not bound him first.

13. And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.

14. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

In what sense the Holy Ghost gave forth this saying by the mouth of Caiaphas, St. John has told us before, in chap. xi. 49, 50: but we never receive it till the same Spirit convinces us of our sin, and of the expediency and necessity of Christ's death in our own case.

SECTION LXXII.

Chap. xviii. ver. 15—27.

PETER DENIETH CHRIST.

15. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

16. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

His courage had already begun to fail him.

17. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

See what the power of nature amounts to, notwithstanding our strongest resolutions, when grace is not in exercise.

18. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold; and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

He little thought that his affections needed to be warmed, and what a cold heart he had, at that time, for his Master.

19. The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.

20. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing.

The answer of Jesus, delivered with the greatest mildness, and without any contempt of the high priest, or of his authority, amounts to this; that as he always taught openly, and in the most public places, those who were present could give him full information of, his doctrine; and that he would do well to examine them concerning it, rather than *Him*, whom he would not believe.

21. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

22. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so ?

This was a great indignity offered to the Son of God. We cannot help thinking so. Let us have an eye upon ourselves. Every sin we commit is that stroke repeated, and goes to his heart.

23. Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil : but if well, why smitest thou me ?

He had indeed borne witness, with the utmost virulence, as we say, but his striking Jesus was no proof in the case.

24. Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

25. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself : they said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples ? he denied it, and said, I am not.

26. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him ?

27. Peter then denied again : and immediately the cock crew.

We know the effect which the cock-crowing had on Peter ; he immediately repented. If any of us are in an evil way, let it have the same effect on us, and, as he did, let us stop short at once.

SECTION LXXIII.

Chap. xviii. ver. 28—40.

JESUS ARRAIGNED BEFORE PILATE.

28. Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment : and it was early, and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled : but that they might eat the passover.

That they might keep themselves from all outward defilement, during the time of the passover. They were, however, all over defiled with blood, and at the same time scrupulous about a ceremony. O the wretched deceivableness of the heart ! Let us see to it, that we put nothing in the place of inward purity.

29. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man ?

Let us ask ourselves this question, Is it not our ground of accusation against him, that his doctrine is too pure and heavenly for us ?

30. They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.

Here the wickedness of their hearts comes full in view ; they would have had Pilate condemn him without proof. The heathen magistrate, however, from his natural sense of good and evil, was more upright than the Jews, with the law of God in their hands.

31. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death :

Upon any other occasion they would have caught eagerly at this concession of Pilate, to judge Jesus. They do not say, that the power of capital punishments was taken from them that same year. How wonderful is the providence of God in working things to his own end ! Christ, by the will of God, and according to his own prediction, was to be crucified ; but if his punishment had been left to the Jews, by their law he must have been stoned.

32. That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

33. Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the king of the Jews ?

34. Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me ?

The meaning seems to be this, As thou dost not say this

of thyself from thy own knowledge, be not over hasty to credit what others say of me.

35. Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? thine own nation, and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

In answer, he tells him, nothing that could give umbrage to him as the Roman governor; and at the same time owns in what sense the charge against him was true.

36. Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Let the men of the world fight for the world: if thou art a servant of Christ, do as he bids thee, take up the cross, and fight for Him, by fighting against the world in thy heart.

It is the Christian's joy, that Christ's kingdom is not from hence. It is to our comfort, that the kingdom of heaven is brought down to us; and now is the time for entering into it, by the separation of our wills and desires from the world.

37. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king.

That is, It is even so as thou sayest; I am a king.

37. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.

There is but one truth, comparatively, worth knowing, namely, that Christ came into the world to redeem us from sin and death, and fit us for heaven, by ruling over us.

37. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

There is no refusing to be tried by this test. If Christ is the truth, those who do not hear him, however wise and prudent they may be in other respects, are not of it. And hearing Christ, is hearing him, with full submission in all things.

38. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?

He thought he did not need to be told what truth was ; or, that one talking of a kingdom not of this world, was a fit person to tell it to him. What Christ said was all a riddle to him. Many, at all times, hear it to as little purpose.

38. And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

It was so much Pilate's interest, and office to condemn him, for calling himself a king, that one cannot help thinking he was overruled by God, in declaring him innocent.

39. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover ; will ye therefore that I release unto you the king of the Jews ?

40. Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

O my soul ! turn short upon thyself. When thou ferrest anything to Christ, verily, this is thy own case, and thou joinest with the Jews, in saying, " Not this man, but Barabbas."

SECTION LXXIV.

Chap. xix. ver. 1—12.

CHRIST ILL TREATED.

1. Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

Thinking, perhaps, to content the Jews with this lesser punishment. But his scourging would not take away our sins, and therefore he must be given up to their blood-thirsty disposition.

2. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,

3. And said, Hail, king of the Jews ! and they smote him with their hands.

Doubtless, you think that you abhor this mockery of the blessed Jesus, and that you could not have been guilty of it for the world. But where is the difference, if we mock him with a false show of subjection? Nay, is it not worse in us, who know what he is, and own him for our King, Saviour, and God?

4. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

It was a marvellous work of Providence, and tends strongly to confirm our belief in Christ, that he was acquitted by the same mouth which condemned him.

5. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man !

Yes; let us behold him; fix our whole attention steadily upon that man, and think what he is to us. Let us see our guilt,—see our pattern. Though the thorns were in a tender part, we do not hear one word of complaint from him.

6. When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.

We read this account to no purpose, if we do not remember, and lay it deeply to heart, that our sins were in that cry.

7. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

It was true, he *ought* to have suffered. Not indeed for the reason *they* gave, but because *we* ought, and because he had put himself in our stead.

8. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;

His fear worked no good effect. He had a natural dis-

cernment of what was right in the case, but he wanted grace to make him stand to his own conviction.

9. And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou ? But Jesus made him no answer.

Jesus took this method, knowing that the truth would be lost upon him, and observing his own rule, of not casting his pearls before swine. We should dread to be in such a state.

10. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me ? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee ?

11. Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above : therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Pilate could have no power of any kind ; whatever he might think of his own greatness, but by the divine will, which orders all things : and especially not against *Him*.

“Therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” Namely, the people of the Jews, who had better means of knowing who he was. Observe, the more light we have, the greater will be our condemnation for sinning against it.

12. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him : but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar’s friend : whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.

This was touching Pilate in a tender part, and setting up his interest against his conscience. They spoke like men that knew the world.

SECTION LXXV.

Chap. xix. ver. 13—27.

PILATE IS OVERCOME BY THE JEWS.

13. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

14. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

The Jews called every Friday, or the day before their sabbath, the preparation, and this in particular, the preparation of the Passover.

“And it was about the sixth hour;” that is, near twelve o’clock, the same point of time with the ending of the third hour, Mark xv. 25, according to the Jews’ division of the day into four parts, or hours, called the first, third, sixth, and ninth hours; the first hour beginning at six o’clock, and ending at nine; the third hour at nine, and ending at twelve; the sixth hour at twelve, and ending at three o’clock; the ninth hour beginning at three o’clock, and ending at six. Others, and perhaps with more probability, say that the Evangelists reckon the hours as we do, and that the *sixth* hour here should be read the *third*, on the authority of some copies. On the latter supposition, Christ hung three hours longer upon the cross than he did according to the former.

15. But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar.

He submitted to this scornful treatment that he might be our King; and he never is, till we are willing to learn of him this same lesson of patient suffering. “The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar.” They said this to gain their point, and as it were to force Christ into their measures. Their subjection to Cæsar was very gall-

ing to them ; but like true men of this world, they were for anything rather than Christ, and his heavenly doctrine, and kingdom.

16. Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

Let us not mistake the men. We, and our sins, led him away.

17. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha :

This was the common place of execution, noisome and filthy with skulls, and dead men's bones ; that no circumstances might be wanting to complete his humiliation. Observe too, it is said, *he went* ; as if all were his own doing. If it had not been his will to go, their compulsion would have availed nothing.

18. Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

This was a true picture of his *mediation* for sinners. Those arms, as they were stretched out *for* all, so they pointed *to* all in the persons of the two thieves. All mankind were upon the cross both in *him* and *them*. Let us know our need of mercy, and be content to be saved by it.

19. And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Blessed God, write it in all our hearts, that this despised, crucified Jesus, is our King ; and make us his people, by the true circumcision of the Spirit.

20. This title then read many of the Jews : for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city : and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

21. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not the King of the Jews : but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

22. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

He had written the truth, without knowing it, by influence from above, and he was not suffered to alter it.

23. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

24. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

Every tittle of the scripture will be fulfilled both as it regards its promises and threatenings, and we have no choice, but of one or the other.

25. Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

26. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Let us observe here the care of the blessed Jesus, in his last moments, for his mother. It was some relief against the sword now in her own heart, to provide her another son, the person he most loved; and he showed his love effectually to John, by bequeathing him such a legacy.

27. Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

St. John's heart explained Christ's will to him, in these words, "Behold thy mother!" The home that John provided for her was the more welcome to her, as it would be a house of spiritual comfort to her.

SECTION LXXVI.

Chap. xix. ver. 28—42.

CHRIST GIVES UP THE GHOST.

28. After this Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

Let us observe, that Jesus saith this, not to have his thirst quenched, but that the scripture might be fulfilled.

29. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar :* and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

30. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished : and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

All scripture concerning Christ was fulfilled, and nothing left undone that he came into the world to accomplish. God was reconciled unto man, and the gates of paradise set wide open for all that would enter into them. Shall we suffer this precious word to be spoken in vain to us?

“ And he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” He did this, of his own accord, and by an act of his Almighty power. He had no farther use for mortal breath, when he had done his work in our mortal body.

31. The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

32. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

33. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs ;

34. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.

This was significant of our atonement and cleansing by him. Justification, and sanctification ; and not one without the other. In this blood and water we may see the whole gospel. St. John intended that a great stress should be laid upon what he saw, as appears by the next verse. The miracle of blood and water flowing freely, and unmixed, from a corpse, was great ; and the use, and spiritual understanding of it, is great also.

* This was a mixture of vinegar and myrrh, to stupify the senses of those who were executed. This might be some charity to their bodies, but none to their souls. The penitent thief might have lost heaven by it.

35. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true : and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

36. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

37. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

Let us notice this again. The scripture is God's word, and will infallibly be made good in everything it says, either in our salvation, or damnation. Under this conviction we shall read it with advantage. "They shall look on him whom they have pierced." If it be God's blessed will for *us*, we must willingly, attentively, and constantly, with penitence, faith, and love, look on him now, thinking ourselves the very persons who pierced him, and for whom he was contented to be pierced, that we may not be forced to look on him another day, to our everlasting confusion.

38. And after this Joseph of Arimathæa, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus : and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

Joseph now declared himself openly, at a time when it might least have been expected, and when others hid themselves.

39. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

40. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

41. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden ; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

42. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day ; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

The day was far spent ; and as the time was short, they must either have buried him in a place nigh at hand, or not at all.

Joseph and Nicodemus showed their affectionate love to the blessed Jesus, by their care of his burial and the great

cost they bestowed upon it; probably, not knowing the scriptures concerning the resurrection, any more than the disciples. Their hearts were known to God under the mistake; and as they were prepared by their simplicity and sincerity to have their eyes opened, they will doubtless have a share in the resurrection of the just.

SECTION LXXVII.

Chap. xx. ver. 1—18

THE DISCIPLES COME TO THE SEPULCHRE.

1. The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

The order of the narrative concerning the resurrection of Jesus, as it lies in the Evangelists, seems to be this: Mary Magdalene, and other women, were early at the sepulchre,—they found the stone rolled away, and the body gone,—they saw two angels; one of whom told them that Jesus was risen, and bid them go and tell his disciples. They went, upon which Peter and John ran to the sepulchre, and having seen what was done, departed.

Mary and the other women staid behind at the sepulchre, when they first saw Jesus himself, and Mary in particular was charged with the message to his disciples, verse seventeenth, and different from that given by the angels.

The only difficulty in the way of this account, arises from Matt. xxviii. 9: where it is said, “As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail.” This implies, that he met them as they were going to the disciples, and before they had spoken with them. The words therefore must not be so understood; but, that *having been*, or, *after they had been*, to tell his disciples, then “Jesus met them, &c.”

2. Then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

3. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.

4. So they ran both together : and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

5. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying ; yet went he not in.

6. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,

7. And the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

8. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.

Namely, the resurrection of Christ from that time forward.

9. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

The most knowing men in the world were not ashamed to confess their former ignorance. When once they were convinced of the resurrection of Jesus, they knew what they had to do, and acted suitably to their belief. What follows is a melancholy truth, but must be spoken. We believe it, but generally without effect.

10. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

11. But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping : and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

12. And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

I suppose this to be a second apparition of the angels, and different from that mentioned in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

13. And they said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? She said unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

14. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

15. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?

Weeping, and seeking, are never in vain. To all such, Jesus manifests himself; in his comforts, as he pleaseth; and certainly in the power of his salvation.

15. She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

16. Jesus saith unto her, Mary.

At the same time he opened her eyes. He can call as powerfully to your souls and mine.

16. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

Now believing, now turning to him, and approaching him, with a full knowledge that it was he himself. To this turn we must all come, with the word Master in our mouths.

17. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

Mary was overjoyed to see Jesus risen again, and seems to have found all she wanted in his bodily presence. Though she showed a great deal of love and respect to him, in the main it was but earthly; and therefore he accordingly gives a check to it, and at the same time raises her thoughts to his ascension, and the fruits of it. She was not to touch him, or lay hold of him with her affections, as he was not yet gone to heaven, to send down the Spirit. Till then he could not be her Saviour. In heaven he is carrying on our salvation; and we need not be a whit behind those who conversed with him in his lifetime, and saw him after his resurrection, in our participation of his spiritual blessings.

Mary Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, was honoured with the first sight of Jesus after his resurrection, and was made a messenger of his ascension to the brethren. What a blessedness is here stamped upon a true repentance! If you are one of the worst of sinners, do as she did, repent, believe, and love, and you may be as sure of favour and acceptance.

“I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” Yes, this is for the comfort of Christ’s friends, the words assure us of this, that the Lord is Christ’s Father and our Father, his God, and our God; our God and Father, in and through him: and thus Christ speaks in the human nature on behalf of the human nature. Dwell upon the words, and speak them to your hearts, till they burn within you.

18. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

SECTION LXXVIII.

Chap. xx. ver. 19—25.

CHRIST APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES.

19. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

Behold, here, a little flock assembled together in the fear of God, and shutting the doors upon them for fear of the Jews. But Christ had his eye upon them, was at hand with comfort, and would not be shut out.

“Jesus saith unto them, Peace be unto you.” This one word was a sufficient antidote both against all their fears from the world, and the upbraidings of their own con-

sciences, for having so lately deserted him. That peace is *ours*, and to *us*; he speaks it, whenever we know how to value it.

20. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

Faith in us answers to this bodily sight, and fastens its attention on the wounds of Christ, both for conviction, and healing. When once we know that we ourselves made those wounds, we cannot stop there; we shall be glad to have the benefit of them.

“Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” No joy like this; and it is our own fault, if we do not see him in his help. Those who are full cannot cast a look towards him.

21. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

Filled with a sense of *his* and *my* peace; without which they would be very unfit preachers of it to others.

22. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

This breathing is the new birth of his children, and as real as the breathing which attends the natural birth, though unseen. It conveyed more power, and greater gifts to the apostles, but conveys life and nourishment to all.

23. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

By opening the doctrine of the kingdom, and declaring, by divine illumination, upon what conditions remission of sins is to be had. What is knowledge but this? And if it had not come down to us in their writings, how should we have lamented the loss!

24. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

Whatever was the reason of his absence, Christ turned it into a benefit to *him*, and to *us*. His doubting once would put an end to it for ever in him, and is our assurance.

25. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

If the apostles had been full in the expectation of a resurrection, and forward to believe it, what outcries should we have heard against their credulity ! Let us make our own advantage of their ignorance of the scripture, and slowness of belief in this matter.

SECTION LXXIX.

Chap. xx. ver. 26—31.

THE CONFESSION OF THOMAS.

26. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them : then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

Peace, again peace ; peace the third time ; peace to them, to you, and to all. Knowing the blessing contained in that word, in faith and its fruits, makes us Christians.

27. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side : and be not faithless, but believing.

How would Thomas be astonished, to hear his very words repeated by Christ ! Set him always before you ; for lo ! there is not a word in your tongues but he knoweth it altogether.

“ And be not faithless, but believing.” Let us ask our-

selves without delay, whether we believe or not, what we expect from our faith, and what it has done for us.

28. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

He had just had experience of his infinite knowledge, and therefore might well cry out, "My Lord and my God." If Christ is not both to us, we know him not. To be our Lord, he must be God; and owning him for our Lord, and Governor, without thinking him to be God, is having more Gods than one. If Thomas was in a mistake, what can we think of Jesus for not correcting it?

29. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Make this blessedness yours. God give us humbling views of ourselves, and then we shall believe.

30. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

In the course of this gospel we have had frequent intimations given us of the great end and use of Christ's *miracles*, and we are called upon at the close of it, and especially on occasion of the crowning miracle of the resurrection, to observe it once more, namely, that Jesus, the worker of them, is the Christ, the Lord's anointed, our king, priest, and prophet, the Son of God, himself God, and therefore able to bear the whole weight of our salvation, by making atonement for our sins, and raising us from our dead state of sin to the feeling, and power of a new life in God. Even so, Lord Jesus! Let this be the great end and aim of all our reading and hearing of thee, that being made alive unto God by thee, we may rejoice in our adoption, and be always growing in grace, live in hope, die in peace, and be raised in glory. Amen.

SECTION LXXX.

Chap. xxi. ver. 1—7.

CHRIST APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES IN GALILEE.

1. After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself.

2. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

3. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee.

They would go to fish to supply their needs. These were the men who were to convert the world; and the power of God was more conspicuous in the meanness of their condition, and want of learning. What cannot God do for us? Verily, nothing hinders his work in us, but ourselves.

3. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

God brought nothing to the net. Murmur not at your disappointments. The hand of God is in them; and if you see it, and take them patiently, they will prove the way for greater manifestations of his grace.

4. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore; but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

Here was a blessing for them which they did not expect, and which made them full amends for their night's unsuccessful labour. "But the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." And why did they not, if he appeared like himself, as we have no reason to suppose but he did? Those who were to be witnesses of Christ's resurrection, are particularly careful to acquaint us, for our greater assurance, how backward they were to believe it themselves.

5. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

He knew they had not, he knows that we have no spiritual food but what he gives us; and he still asks the question, with no other intent than to suit himself to our answer. If we say, *No; Lord, help me*; he wants nothing more from us, but he is ready to fill us with all good things: if the heart does not give this answer, he leaves it to itself.

6. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.

Doing what Jesus bids us, in faith and hope of what he will do for us, we are sure is casting the net on the right side of the ship; and the way to find Christ in all his benefits.

It is Dr. Whitby's observation here, that "Christ being absent, they caught nothing; but when he is present, they having his command, enclose a very great multitude of fishes; to teach them, that though in preaching the gospel, they were insufficient to do anything as of themselves, (2 Cor. iii. 5,) yet having his command to go and teach all nations, and the promise of his presence with them, they should be wonderfully successful in bringing many to the faith."

This is quoted to show the benefit and pleasure of looking farther than the bare letter, or outside of scripture; and will be my apology for some attempts of the same kind, in the course of this exposition.

6. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it, for the multitude of fishes.

Three thousand souls were caught in the net of the Gospel by St. Peter's first sermon. It is an exceeding great multitude which will be gathered by it, from first to last, into the kingdom of heaven. Now is *our* time.

7. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved, saith unto Peter, It is the Lord.

If we are Christians indeed, we may say this from our

experience of his work in us, our repentance, faith, and willing subjection to God, our new heart, and new spirit.

7. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

Peter had been without his upper coat, but he did not think it becoming to come so to Jesus. O! that we were in as much haste to come to Christ, as Peter was, when he cast himself into the sea to go early to the Saviour.

SECTION LXXXI.

Chap. xxi. ver. 8—17.

THEY ARE SUCCESSFUL IN FISHING, AND CHRIST DINES WITH THEM.

8. And the other disciples came in a little ship, (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

9. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

See this, as leading to *him*, in the provision he has made for your souls in the scriptures. Look to *him*, who always stands ready for you with his bread of life.

10. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

That they might feast their eyes with the greatness of the miracle, and have a foretaste of their success in preaching the gospel. Blessed Jesus! speak this word here.

11. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

12. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the

disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

They were struck dumb with wonder, and an awful sense of his presence.

13. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

Is it our great desire and daily prayer, that Jesus should thus come to *us* with a portion of meat for our souls?

14. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

Not the third time in all of his showing himself to any after his resurrection, but to *all* the apostles, or several of them *together*. See chap. xx. 19, 26; 1 Cor. xv. 5—7.

15. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

Lovest thou me more than these present? namely the other disciples. Peter's former zealous professions, and present behaviour in casting himself into the sea to come to Jesus, gave occasion for the question. "More than these," according to some, is, more than his nets and fishing boat; that is, more than the gain of his occupation,—more than the world. I can hardly think the question was so put to Peter; with respect to others, it may afford matter of serious consideration.

"He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Let us not mistake; Christ expects this answer from the sheep, as well as the shepherd: O heart! speak for thyself. "He saith unto him, Feed my lambs." *My* lambs, *My* sheep. These were purchased with Christ's own blood, and yet liable to perish for want of their own, and the shepherd's care. Do not perish; you need not. If your shepherd (namely, your minister) should neglect you, neglect not yourselves. Never forget who is the great Shepherd and Bishop of your souls, (namely, Jesus Christ,)

that he knows all your wants, laid down his life for you, and will not lose one of you, if you will be found of him.

16. He saith again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ? Peter was grieved, because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me ? and he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Jesus had no doubt of Peter's love, but he must call for this proof of it, and inculcate the sacred charge to feed his sheep, old and young, however the repetition of it might grieve and search his heart. Lord, it is a memorable instance of thy tender compassion for souls, a most awakening admonition to those who are concerned in feeding them, and a solemn warning to all of the worth of them.

SECTION LXXXII.

Chap. xxi. ver. 18—25.

CHRIST'S CHARGE TO PETER.

18. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest : but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

When young, thou wast thy own master, and free from danger, having no world to provoke. Speaking according to nature, Peter should be carried whither he would not. In the power of divine grace he was not only willing to die, but desired to be crucified with his head downward, affirming that he was unworthy to suffer in the same posture wherein his Lord had suffered before him.

19. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

1st. Christ signified by what death he should glorify God. This might seem but poor encouragement to Peter to be diligent in his duty, as well as an ill return for his love to Jesus. But the apostles were taught to call that glorifying God, which the world would think a hard service. That was the happiest death to them which brought the most glory to God, and most good to men. Let us learn from them to give glory to him, by a thankful submission to his will in all things, in life and in death.

“He saith to him, Follow me.” It is the glory and great blessedness of us all, to follow him. For this end we have been reading of him, and we are come to a happy conclusion of it, if we resolve to take him as our teacher, and tread in his steps, as God shall enable us: and we believe on him in vain, if we do not.

20. Then Peter turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

21. Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

22. Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.

Let us take particular notice of this. Our business is at home, and our own work is plainly before us; let us mind that, without prying too curiously into the will of God concerning others. The gentle reproof here given to Peter should keep us all in the right way.

23. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die; yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die: but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

The meaning is that St. John should not die till the coming of Christ to destroy Jerusalem, and put a final period to the Jewish economy. This is sometimes called

his coming, and was a prelude to his coming to judgment. The brethren seem to have understood Jesus as if he spake of the last. In the main, their mistake was harmless; but it may be a caution to us to look narrowly to the words of scripture.

24. This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.

25. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

If so little has been recorded by the Holy Spirit of the deeds of Jesus, and so many more might have been set down, that comparatively speaking the world could not have contained the books that should have been written, how inexcusable must we be, if we neglect to read and understand the few which he has set down for our instruction. Lord, do thou open our eyes that we may behold wonderous things out of thy law. Amen.—*Edit.*

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THE END.

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